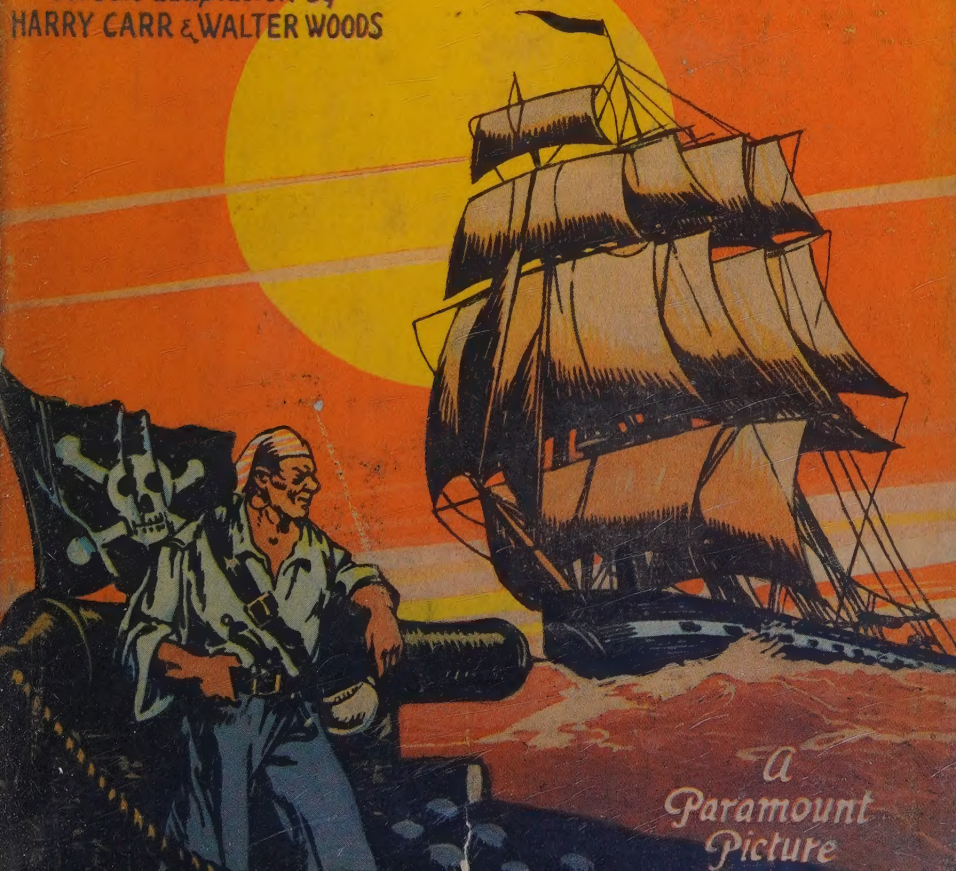
"OLD IRONSIDES"

Novelized by A·M·R·WRIGHT

Based on
JAMES CRUZE'S
PRODUCTION OF THE
STORY BY
LAURENCE
STALLINGS

Screen adaptation by
HARRY CARR & WALTER WOODS



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"OLD IRONSIDES"

By A. M. R. WRIGHT

Old Ironsides! The very name has a ring of patriotism and adventure that conjures up visions of old sailing days when frigates raced before the wind. *Old Ironsides!* What do *you* know of her beyond the vague fact that she was an ancient vessel recently salvaged from a junk yard fate by school children's pennies? Here is the true story of her triumphant career,—a briny tale stranger than fiction that lets out from between these book covers a breath of salt air; hum of taut rigging; echoes of half-forgotten wars; flash of Turkish pirates' scimitars; the roar of British guns. Within these pages the old ship renews her youth and once more sails majestically from New England coasts to strange scenes of Oriental piracy and plunder, — and back again, pursuing and pursued.

Through it all runs a charming romance interwoven with deeds of naval daring and patriotic sacrifice, bloodshed and devotion. Even the veriest landsman must thrill to this epic of the grandest frigate in our navy!

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A Paramount Picture.

WHEN CUPID IS THE HELMSMAN. "*Old Ironsides.*"

"OLD IRONSIDES"

NOVELIZED BY

A. M. R. WRIGHT

FROM THE ORIGINAL STORY
BY HARRY CARR AND WALTER WOODS
PRODUCED ON THE SCREEN BY
JAMES CRUZE
SCREEN ADAPTATION BY
LAURENCE STALLINGS
A PARAMOUNT PICTURE

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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FOREWORD

EPIC stories, whether written in book form or portrayed on the screen, are traditionally the work of many minds.

The epic of "Old Ironsides" is no exception.

Credit for the brilliant idea of this story goes primarily to Harry Carr. Newspaper man, critic, and Annapolis classmate of the Hon. Curtis Wilbur, Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Carr first conceived the tale and motion picture while rummaging through a file of musty old naval archives. Re-reading the heroic deeds which throw a halo around the memory of that valorous hulk, he once more lived the lives of Decatur, Lawrence, Porter and Somers, seeing them pace her decks.

Carr offered his idea to Jesse L. Lasky, first vice-president in charge of production for Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, for a photoplay "in the grand manner." That gentleman, highly enthused, immediately called Director James Cruze (famed for "The Covered Wagon") and Scenarist Walter Woods, into conference.

All were agreed, that here, before them, lay the foundation for what would always

remain—an eternal monument to the screen. One thing was needed, a dramatic treatment of the story that would thrill and inspire when flashed on the silver sheet. Laurence Stallings, author of "What Price Glory" and "The Big Parade," was the man chosen to prepare such a treatment.

To Mrs. A. M. R. Wright was given the monumental task of molding the efforts of Carr, Woods and Stallings into book form. The spirited story of "Old Ironsides" and her glory, which you hold in your hands, is the result.

As we write these words, James Cruze is on the high seas with a hundred gallant ships, filming "Old Ironsides." He has been given the key to Paramount's vast resources and told to take what he would. After a careful survey of screendom's eligibles,— Esther Ralston, Wallace Beery, George Bancroft, Charles Farrell and Johnnie Walker were chosen to head the tremendous cast.

Paramount honestly believes "Old Ironsides" to be the most stupendous undertaking ever planned by any motion picture organization. Its success lies wholly with you—the public.

CONTENTS

PART I

HER KEEL IS LAID

"Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute!"
—CHARLES C. PINCKNEY.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A Boy Dreams of the Sea	3
II	Barbary Pirates!	10
III	"Oak, Red Cedar and Hard Pine"	24
IV	Gold Braid	32
V	Stephen Meets a Lady	37
VI	And Sees Her Again	46
VII	Heart of Oak for Ships	58
VIII	From the Old Dominion	71
IX	Stephen Fights a Duel and Makes a Friend	81
X	The *Constitution* Leaves the Ways	91

PART II

HER "SCHOOLBOY" CAPTAINS

"David . . . thou art but a youth."
—I SAMUEL.

XI	Midshipmen	99
XII	A Tribute of Money	108

CHAPTER		PAGE
XIII	A Tribute of Powder	118
XIV	"Peppery" Preble's "Schoolboys"	124
XV	Bad Luck Bainbridge Falls Among Pirates	129

PART III

HER TASK BEGUN

"If we want commerce we must have a navy."
—GEORGE WASHINGTON.

XVI	Behind Barbary Prison Bars	139
XVII	A Desperate Scheme	144
XVIII	The *Intrepid* Tries Her Fate	148
XIX	"The Most Daring Act"	159
XX	Reuben James Braves a Scimitar	171
XXI	A Fire Ship	180
XXII	Inferno	185

PART IV

HER TASK DELAYED

"I have not yet begun to fight!"
—JOHN PAUL JONES.

XXIII	"Oil" for "Pepper"	191
XXIV	Home Again—and Susan!	200
XXV	The Aisle of Crossed Swords	209
XXVI	Commodore Barron Strikes His Flag	219
XXVII	The *Constitution* Takes Flight	233

PART V

HER "SCHOOLBOYS'" TRIUMPHS

"Our country . . . may she always be right, but our country, right or wrong!"
—STEPHEN DECATUR.

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXVIII	Captain Hull Wins a Hat	245
XXIX	A Bloody Christmas	254
XXX	*Old Ironsides*	265
XXXI	Another "Schoolboy" Triumphs	276

PART VI

HER TASK DONE

"The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more."
—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

XXXII	Decatur Finishes *Old Ironsides'* Task	285
XXXIII	Commodore Barron Pays a Grudge	298
XXXIV	The Eagle of the Sea Furls Her Wings	306

PART I

HER KEEL IS LAID

Millions for Defense, but not one cent for Tribute!
—Charles C. Pinckney.

"OLD IRONSIDES"

CHAPTER I

A BOY DREAMS OF THE SEA

A WISTFUL young clerk sat gazing out upon the old Philadelphia wharves from behind the square-leaded window panes of a shipping office that bore this sign swinging over its low doorway:

> MESSRS. GURNEY & SMITH
> *Agents for the U. S. Navy*
> Shipbuilding Materials
> Marine Supplies

The youth, scarcely eighteen, yet warmly resentful of the term "boy," sat with his chin on his fists, his elbows resting on a ledger opened to the account for March, 1797.

As his eyes strayed from ledger columns out to the blue Delaware, his nose scorned near-by scents of ink and dust and cracking calfbound volumes. Yes, and even the dank smell of

waterlogged piers and muddy wharf wash, indulging instead in fancied sniffs of the sharp salt air far out at sea. So his thoughts kept wandering from fellow clerks bent over desks, to taut ships' rigging humming in the wind and wet with deep-sea spray. His heart was ever with the ocean, but his lot had thus far fallen only to scratching quill and inky columns.

Heartsick with despair he pictured himself grown gray after a futile life given only to the monotony of balancing accounts, and standing, not bold and ruddy from tramping windy decks, but pale from musty office air; stoop shouldered from years of humping over ledgers.

His father, forsooth, was not wan and stooped from a lifetime indoors! Straight and strong he strode his own quarterdeck, as *his* father (of the French navy) had before him. Even now *he* was cruising along hostile foreign coasts. *He* make daily entries in black ink here and red ink there, tediously checking long lists and making totals tally? Ah, no,—when *he* was nineteen he commanded a tall-sparred merchantman. And later, when merchantmen were preyed upon alike by skulking pirate and honest foe, in command first of the privateer *The Royal Louis* and then *The Fair American* (names of romance and adventure!), he had

soon distinguished himself by capturing more than one vessel in brisk encounter, and might yet capture more if rumors of war were true.

This was the man who had put his boys not aboard ship but into a shipping office where he held an interest, thinking, perhaps, that after all, for lads, the land was safer than the sea.

Why, fretted his rebellious son, had the father taken him on cruises with unforgettable smells of tar and taste of salt spray, if he was afterwards to doom him to an inkpot? He was but six years old when his father had first thrilled his soul with a tossing voyage across the rough gray sea, and now a landlubber's life was his fate.

The same fate had newly fallen on his brother James, also with Messrs. Gurney & Smith, though the mother deplored sending this younger son so far from their Maryland home as great Philadelphia.

At least in Philadelphia one met men and action and felt a stir of national events that never rippled the seclusion and serenity of quiet Maryland farms. The boys had longed to live in the capital ever since the great John Paul Jones had passed through that city some years before when their father had joined the cheering crowd that thronged after him through

narrow cobbled streets, and the boys had followed worshiping from afar the hero of those immortal words, "I have not yet *begun* to fight!"

At this turn of thought toward John Paul Jones the young clerk drew his discontented gaze from the window, and with head on hand, fell idly to scratching rough outlines of that admiral's doughty tub *Bonhomme Richard.* On the mantelpiece at home there stood a full-rigged model of that ship, built by the boy's own patient hands, complete in every careful detail, not only to each gun but to wee carved gunners, while the rigging swarmed with tiny sailors, small midshipmen were fastened in the tops, and even John Paul Jones and Lieut. Richard Dale, themselves, in gayly painted uniforms stood aft together by the little ensign staff in unmistakable miniature. Yet the hands that made this model, unroughened by the tug of tarred rope, were strong but smooth, bearing only an inky stain upon one middle finger.

The owner of this inky finger now pondered gloomily.

Must sons of privateersmen become bookkeepers? As well hitch a war horse to a plough as chain a Decatur to a clerk's desk! So rebelled young Stephen Decatur, his eyes scowl-

ing, his fine young face clouded with dread that, with the Revolution over, he had been born too late to do patriotic duty on the sea! Little he thought that day that the name STEPHEN DECATUR was to be blazoned forever in Navy annals for "the most daring exploit of the age!"

The disconsolate Stephen was roused now by his deskmate and chum, Richard Somers, who, like himself, had entered the service of Messrs. Gurney & Smith thinking that the next best thing to being in the navy was to supply the navy with materials for building ships.

With a surprised cry and a swift nudge at Stephen's arm, Dick Somers sprang up and joined other clerks now scurrying excitedly to the window, elbowing and thumping one another in boyish horseplay as they jostled for first place to see what was happening outside.

Shaken from his dreams, Stephen now rushed to the crowded window and gripping Dick's shoulders swung himself up to look over his head. Dick Somers, slim and fair, with delicate features of an almost girlish beauty, and Stephen Decatur, dark, lithe and manly, peered out now upon a scene on the river which was to influence both their lives,—lives destined for bold and brilliant service to their country.

A shattered Indiaman was limping slowly with rigging sadly torn by cannon, her main top gallants shot away and her mizzen royal splintered. Her sails were shot to shreds and patched.

From a commotion on the wharf, word was passed that this was Gurney & Smith's own *Betsy Ross* back from India laden with finest hemp.

"The French have shot her all to bits!" cried out impetuous Jamie Decatur, knowing that his father convoyed U. S. merchantmen through foreign waters fraught with danger since hostilities with France were brewing.

"France will have war on her hands!" declared his brother Stephen hotly, and there was a grumble of indignant assent among the excited young men at the window. Dick Somers suggested that this might be the work of some British privateer and when some one else dissented there was a hubbub of rapid argument and conjecture.

But now the *Betsy* was painfully nosing to the wharf, and her crew, wounded and bandaged, seen on deck by those ashore, threw the onlookers into such a state that in their eagerness to hear of the ship's calamity the clerks of Messrs. Gurney & Smith all turned their

backs upon journals and ledgers and ran out pell-mell toward the dock. Stephen outstripped the rest, and reaching the crowd already gathered there, was first to call back to Dick and the others:

"She met with Barbary Pirates!"

CHAPTER II

BARBARY PIRATES!

Before long the Captain of the ill-fated *Betsy* came ashore to report to Mr. Gurney, and as the crowd fell back to let him pass, curiously gazing at the turban-like bandage swathing his head, our boys recognized him and could not repress friendly calls at the expense of his dignity.

"Ahoy there, Charlie Stewart! Oh, Charlie! Pipe the topgallant sail!"

Captain Charlie Stewart greeted this salute with a good-natured Irish grin on his handsome face and as his muscular figure entered the office with a sea-going lurch of his long legs, the boys pressed in close behind him especially anxious to hear what had happened for genial Charlie Stewart was a general favorite here.

Bursting with impatience while he was closeted with Mr. Gurney, the young men sat about on their desks, legs swinging, talking impulsively of war. Office work was at a standstill to the despair of old Mr. Puffer, in charge, who was wholly out of sympathy with Stephen, Dick

and James at all times and who now stewed and fussed about, glowering fiercely through his square iron-rimmed spectacles and declaring grumpily that, "You idling boys will never amount to a bucket of bilge!"

When Stewart finally appeared, he was instantly cornered by the boys clamoring for news, and even old Puffer himself edged near to hear the captain's tale of piracy.

"Well," obliged Charlie, boiling down the long report he had submitted to the firm, "we were off Gibraltar, homeward bound, when we sighted the Company's own ship *Dauphin* hailed by what seemed a peaceful merchant vessel. But these waters are as alive with pirates as a rain barrel is with water bugs since Portugal has let them slip out past Gibraltar from the Mediterranean where they breed. So we were suspicious, for the craft, by the slant of her lateen sails, was a Moorish felucca. Sure enough, in a trice our lookout cried that the *Dauphin's* distress signal was a-flying. We hoisted more sail and bore down swiftly upon them, for we carried cannon and the *Dauphin* needed help.

"The corsair had come longside with her guns hidden when suddenly her long lateen boom swung over the *Dauphin's* deck and in

the blink of an eye a swarm of pirates with cutlasses dropped on board.

"By this time we were near enough to make out the *Dauphin's* deck black with the savages in murderous onslaught on the crew, but, fearing to fire lest we cripple the *Dauphin* herself, we were maneuvering for position when the Turk opened on us with her stern-chasers and blew away our tops.

"To make a long story short, she raked our decks, hulled us and left us to sink, making off with the *Dauphin* which was still in good shape to refit as a pirate ship. One seaman from the *Dauphin,* in spite of his wounds, escaped by swimming to our ship, and from him we learned that the crew had their clothes stripped from them, were tossed a few rags to cover their nakedness and taken in irons to Tripoli to be sold as slaves. May the Lord have mercy on their souls and deliver them safely back some day. Ah, well, then, by sweating at the pumps we managed to keep afloat until the ship's carpenter plugged the holes in our hull and then by running up every rag we had we slipped away and here we are where, I am bound to say, I never expected to be again, anchored snug in the Delaware River. But I swear to God!" he finished, and the young Captain's face dark-

ened with the intensity of his oath, "that some day I shall strike a mortal blow at the Barbary pirates!"

"Who are these Pirates?" piped up Jamie Decatur, whose tastes were frankly less warlike than his older brother's, and who was not ashamed to ask a question that some of the others, equally curious, hesitated to put and reveal their ignorance.

"You ought to know that," reproved his brother Stephen promptly. "For over two hundred years the corsairs of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli have preyed on commerce and lived on ransom from Christian captives. The United States ought to stop it!" he finished with passion.

Captain Stewart smiled. "Seven powerful kings of Europe are paying annual tribute to the Barbary Pashas. What do you think a weak little new-born country like ours can do about it, Stephen?" he asked—adding bitterly, "The United States pays tribute too."

"We pay tribute to Algiers?" cried Dick Somers in surprise. "Why, where is the place?"

"On the northern coast of Africa. I know that much!" Jamie informed him. "Morocco's opposite Gibraltar on the Atlantic, then comes

Algiers on the Mediterranean, and next to her Tunis and then Tripoli. Somewhere there in Tunis ancient Carthage stood. Quite a place in Cæsar's day, my boy!"

"How did those little places get power enough to dictate to all Europe?" Dick demanded, mystified.

"Why, it began over two hundred years ago, didn't it, Charlie?" Stephen answered. "There were a rascally pair of Turks famous as pirates on the Mediterranean."

"Barbarossa and his brother," prompted Stewart.

"Yes, old Red Beard,—his real name was Khair-ed Din, as near as I can pronounce it, and he had a younger brother, Horuk. They were such a powerful pair and so much feared that the Prince of Algiers hired them to help him in a war of defense against Spain. They won and then what did the rascals do but turn around and murder the poor Prince and help themselves to his Kingdom. Barbarossa made himself ruler of Algiers, and set his brother over Tunis and later they both took Morocco and Tripoli too.

"Ever since then, Jamie, Turkish Pirates have ruled the Barbary states finding piracy

more profitable than commerce and growing richer on ransoms than on trade."

"Yes," said Charlie Stewart, "every sailor knows that his cargo may be captured by these thieves and his ships seized to be refitted for piracy. As for the crews," his face darkened, "the Bey looks them over and selects the slaves he wants, holding others for high ransom, and the rest are auctioned off into slavery to Turk and Moor devils who delight in fiendish torture of Christian slaves, branding them with hot irons, lashing them with bastinado, harnessing them with mules and oxen to haul heavy quarry stones, until, whenever these unfortunates are rescued, they are so scarred and worn, starved and ill that they seldom last long enough to enjoy regained freedom. Yet each year ships bear gold to the Barbary states from European powers ransoming the year's catch of captives."

"But doesn't Europe do anything about it?" Dick persisted, angry and amazed.

"Do? Yes. They make treaties and the corsairs break them. The men sent by the French to treat with Algiers were tied to the mouth of cannon and blown out to sea with the insolent message, 'Thus do we return your envoys!' "

"But surely England could quell them!" Dick declared. "She has the biggest navy in the world!"

Captain Stewart shrugged his shoulders cynically. "It suits England's purpose to let them choke all trade but hers upon the Mediterranean. She uses them for her own ends. On the day the *Dauphin* was lost, two English ships entered the Strait with a hundred thousand dollars' worth of naval supplies as a little gift for the Bey of Tripoli. So, you see, she too pays tribute, but her policy really amounts to hiring them to prey on other nations' commerce."

At this Stephen blazed. "How can England let Turks torture Christians merely to further her commerce?"

Again Stewart shrugged his shoulders.

"In the interest of trade, it is dog eat dog, Steve," he said grimly. "Aren't all wars fought for commerce? Commerce is the breath of life to a nation, Stephen. Its trade routes are its arteries of life blood, and I am proud to have sailed our merchant ships. But now France and Spain are fighting England. We have just finished fighting her, and France is squeezing us to fight again. Napoleon is boasting that he will cross the Channel and

invade English soil. Well, then, if England uses Barbary pirates as a desperate tool to cut hostile nations' arteries—why, all's fair in love and war."

"It is wicked and shameful!" Stephen flamed. "What has America done about it? Why don't we fight?"

"We have no ships to fight with," Stewart answered. "When the Revolution ended we had exactly three warships. After the treaty of peace we sold them and then we had none except an unfinished ship-of-the-line, *America,* begun for John Paul Jones but not finished in time for him to use, so we gave it away to the King of France as a gift of gratitude. So now we have no warships at all."

"None?" demanded Somers, amazed.

"The government has none. There are some privateers, and most of them are only merchant vessels refitted and armed with a few flimsy cannon. The United States has no navy, and so of course we have to endure insults and worse upon the sea because we have no weapon to retaliate."

"Why don't we have a navy?" demanded Jamie, son of a privateersman.

Stewart cocked a cynical eyebrow. "They say we can't afford one. Too much war debt

after the war with England to warrant the expense of keeping up a navy."

"Aren't we going to have one?" Stephen asked. "I thought we were. Gurney & Smith are 'agents for the Navy.' "

"Well," Charlie replied, "four years ago Algerine pirates sunk some of our merchant ships and sold two hundred American seamen into slavery. *That* stung our country to action! Congress ordered six frigates built but the keels for only three were actually laid. Then for two years nothing more was done when,—instead of sending a squadron to the Mediterranean to dictate terms,—a shameful treaty was made and work on the frigates stopped. Those ships are lying now unfinished in the shipyards: The *Constitution* in Boston, the *Constellation* in Baltimore and the *United States* right here in Philadelphia."

"But they have begun work again on the *United States*," Stephen interrupted. "I know because last month the company sent me to New Jersey to come down as super-cargo with a load of Jersey lumber for the *United States* herself. Perhaps the treaty is broken."

"It ought to be!" Stewart declared vehemently. "By it we paid a million dollars ransom for the seamen captives then and there.

That was humiliating but humane. We could not jeopardize them for mere pride. But besides that we agreed to pay an annual tribute of thousands of dollars worth of naval supplies. Gurney & Smith have done their part in furnishing the Government with these. And more than even that we must continue to pay a ransom for all future captives! After buying peace this way with Algiers we had to bribe jealous Morocco, Tunis and Tripoli as well. We paid out over a million dollars in tribute money again last year,—enough to have finished our frigates and sent them to dictate an honorable peace at the muzzles of their guns. Yet a loss like the *Dauphin's* is common enough. Had the *Betsy* sunk, as they supposed, the corsairs would have declared she did not fly an American flag. Treaties cannot be made with such devils!"

"Shame on the United States to let such things go on! Shame on the people of this country who threw off the yoke of England but bow their necks to the yoke of piracy!" denounced Stephen passionately.

"Easy, mate," Stewart calmed him. "All of us feel that way, but we cannot spare the few ships we are building to fight pirates if they have to be used to fight France."

"I cannot understand all this talk of *fighting France,*" said Jamie. "I thought she was our friend and helped us in the Revolution?"

Again a small cynical smile creased Stewart's face.

"When she helped us win the Revolution," he said, "it was one for us and two for her, I fear. France was at war with England then herself. She is now. And she demands our help. Well, it is not our quarrel. We are not going to fight England just because France tells us to. The United States has refused point blank to obey France's command to go to war, and France, in retaliation has set her men-of-war upon our merchantmen."

"Why attack defenseless vessels?" demanded Jamie stormily.

"Shipping and commerce are a nation's lungs," said Stewart. "If they be stopped, that nation strangles. If our country could furnish all her needs at home, cutting off our merchantmen could not stifle her."

"I do not understand it," said the youngster helplessly.

"Well, Jamie," his brother explained, "there is no declaration of war between us and France, and I do not believe there will be,—they say John Adams is too anxious to patch

things up. We have not so soon forgotten Lafayette, and France still remembers Franklin. You might say that we are at peace on land but at war on sea with France."

"Why?" questioned Jamie insistently.

"Oh, it's a strange situation, lad," said the Captain. "England still keeps up a practice that had much to do with bringing on our Revolution, but which, queerly enough, the Revolution did not settle. She calls it the 'Right of Search' or 'Right of Impressment.' That is, she claims the right to search any American vessel and press into her own service any British sailor found aboard. After a hundred years of war England is in sore need of sailors. Press gangs are hired to kidnap men from British wharfs and streets and carry them off to serve the navy. Still they never have men enough. So they rake the decks of our ships to find and claim their men, and do not hesitate to take ours. The men are none too anxious to be claimed; for a British sailor's life is only brutal slavery. I've heard many a one say the man is lucky who gets too crippled to be useful. I saw one British sailor, found on ship with me, who was impressed. As soon as he knew he would be taken he ran to our carpenter's bench and cut his right hand off with the

ax and said, 'Now I am no use as a sailor, and this is easier than service.' Oh, our own service is no feather bed, but Great Britain's is far worse. Our Captains at worst can only legally lay on twelve lashes of the cat-o'-nine-tails across a trussed-up, naked sailor's back, but many a British sailor gets flogged to death.

"Now France, in seeking an excuse to force us to become her ally has hit upon this 'press-gang' practice. 'Very well,' says she, 'if England does,—we shall.' So all French men-of-war have orders to treat American vessels exactly as Americans allow themselves to be treated by the British. So, if an English man-of-war impresses two sailors from an American ship, the first French warship to find it out, promptly impresses two more to balance the score.

"If you sailed the seas and had to submit to such searches you would see many a lively encounter and know full well there's war going on even though there has been no declaration of it. Sooner or later there is bound to be an explosion, and we'll have no time to fight pirates with France and England buzzing about our ears!"

"But what of the *Dauphin's* crew in the meantime?" demanded Somers.

"They may die in slavery, like many others, long before the United States can reclaim them. It is a scandal, but it is the best the Government can do," Stewart replied.

"The best the Government can do!" flamed Stephen, his vivid, dark young face flushed with the heat of wrath and his seething excitement. "It is all very well to talk of so many seamen captured and ransomed for so much each year. But these are our own men. Why they sailed from this very dock! We knew most of them well! Are we to let them die in chains while we stand around the office with our hands in our pockets calling it a scandal and a shame and doing nothing about it?" And then, a solemn resolution forming in his soul, Stephen Decatur made a vow.

"*I* will sweep the Barbary Pirates from the sea myself!" he swore.

CHAPTER III

"OAK, RED CEDAR AND HARD PINE"

"WELL spoken, Steve!" cried Stewart heartily; "your hand upon it and my pledge to the same cause. The United States is only taking a breathing space between wars. Eventually she must strike! Come with me and let us strike with her. I am going to join the navy—if we raise one! These ships in building will need men."

"The Navy!" chorused both Decaturs in admiration and envy.

"Yes, I made up my mind when the *Betsy's* topmasts fell, that I'd meet these sea-devils again some day, aboard a frigate with forty guns to speak my mind! There is talk now of raising a navy because of war with France. Come, let us be among the first to get commissions!"

At this there was a murmured applause and fire shone in Stephen's eye.

"How can we get commissions?" he asked.

"We must find some official willing to get Congress to appoint us to warships,—when

warships are built. It ought to be an easy thing for you Decaturs, with your father already in the service. For my part, I hope to be made lieutenant."

"Lieutenant!" cried Stephen covetously.

"Why not?" said the dashing young Captain with blithe self-assurance. "I've been at sea since I was a nine-year-old cabin boy. To be sure I'm not much older than you, Steve, at least I am not yet twenty, but the sea was my wet nurse and at your age, my hearty, I was commanding an East Indiaman around the African Cape. You have wasted enough of your life on land, Steve. Come with me, lad, and make up for lost time. I shall be ashore in a few days and then we will see what can be done toward getting commissioned."

All his dreams of the sea lighted the younger lad's face and when he spoke it was with the calmness of a great decision.

"I will come with you," said Stephen Decatur.

And now came one of those strange turns of events that incline us to believe "there is a divinity that shapes our ends."

Mr. Smith, of Gurney & Smith, came out of his inner office, a sheaf of papers in his hand and irritation on his brow.

"Here a moment, Decatur," he called, and as Stephen answered he said, "Stephen, I must send you off. We are short of men and pressed hard for a shipment of lumber. You are to go and hasten it, boy, for you did well on your trip to Jersey for the *United States* floor pieces. This trip will be longer. You are to go to Virginia. There has been lumber, cut and seasoned, lying there since Congress stopped ship building. Now Congress has changed its mind. The ships are to be finished after all."

"Does it mean war?" interrupted Stephen eagerly.

"No, no, no, let us hope not. But these ships are so far advanced that they are to be completed at any rate. The shipment that you are to supervise is for the frigate *Constitution*,— oak, red cedar and hard pine."

At these words Stephen's dark eyes sparkled and his face flushed with excitement, for already his way seemed opening before him. These were the very ships whose keels were laid to punish pirates and now he himself was bringing for their completion woods with the good ring and rhythm of "oak, red cedar and hard pine." There was to be a navy after all! But in another moment the brightness of his face faded, and the sparkle in his eyes gave

way to a glint of determination at the necessity of telling his chief he sought to leave his employ.

Unaware of the lad's hesitation, Mr. Smith beckoned him into his private cubbyhole, spreading out upon a desk his handful of papers for explanation. Before he could begin, Stephen found his voice.

"I cannot go, sir," he began, and there was reluctance in his tone, for even in the year of our Lord 1797 a man's job seemed suddenly to bud with fair promise on the instant that he meant to leave it.

Mr. Smith was so astonished at this unexpected declaration that he felt he could not have heard aright, but Stephen raced on.

"Since the loss of the *Dauphin*, sir, there are some of us who feel that the time has come to act, and it is only honorable to tell you that we plan to forsake the 'agents for the navy' for the navy itself. Let some other clerk ship wood for the frigates, we are going to sail them against pirates!"

As he spoke thus with all the splendid breeziness and self-confidence of youth a shadow of sadness settled over the older man's face. For some time he did not answer, and Stephen, a little breathless from the effort and choking

earnestness of this speech, found no further words.

At last Mr. Smith roused himself and spoke.

"How many of you lads are carried away with this notion?"

"Captain Stewart and I," said Stephen, stiffening, "and I think Richard Somers and perhaps my brother."

"Stewart too, eh?" said Mr. Smith meditatively.

"Yes, sir, all of us." Stephen was firm.

"And you think that it is a good and loyal thing to take three clerks out of my office all at once and rob me of my best Captain besides?" There was a hidden twinkle in the man's eyes but of this Stephen took no note. Bracing himself for expected opposition:

"The *Dauphin* was your own ship, sir," he countered indignantly and then, not succeeding in restraining his rush of anger:—"Are you willing to let your own men rot in Turkish dungeons and begrudge them the aid of a few clerks?"

"Softly, boy," Mr. Smith quieted him with an indulgent smile for this hot-headed speech. "No one begrudges them aid, least of all myself. If I were younger, I would run away to sea to

avenge the *Dauphin,* too. But what are you planning to do?"

"Why, sir," stammered the boy, quite taken back by this kindness. "We haven't had time to plan much. At first we hoped my father could arrange something. He commands the privateer *Fair American,* but he is somewhere off the coast of France and there is no telling when we could reach him. If these three new frigates are to be finished, perhaps there will be a real navy. Of course we would like to try for appointments on one of them right away."

"Oh, of course!" assented Mr. Smith drily, still patient with the boy's impatience.

In the silence that followed Stephen crammed tense fists into his breeches pockets. Mr. Smith drummed thoughtfully upon his desk, saying finally:

"Stephen, this is what we'll do. You will go on this trip to Virginia. Stewart will complete his voyage by taking the *Betsy* on to unload at Camden and returning her here to supervise repairs. And I will give you boys a letter to Commodore Barry who is in charge of building the frigate here in Philadelphia, recommending you to him for appointments."

At this generous offer there was such a surge

of gratitude and exaltation from Stephen's heart that his cheeks grew hot with pounding blood, and, unable to relieve the throbbing in his throat by vent of a lusty cheer, he found himself struggling with tongue-tied appreciation.

"Say no more, Stephen," said Mr. Smith sympathetically: "I had dreams of the sea my self when I was a boy, but they faded. We can talk over your trip later, but now let us speak to the others." With a reassuring pat on Stephen's shoulder he pushed open the door and called out. "Stephen tells me some of you are planning to leave us and he seemed to fear I would oppose it. But the loss of the *Dauphin's* men has struck home to us all, and if you have made up your minds to go, I can only say, 'God bless you.' "

He made a gesture of protest at their quick stir of approval, saying, "It is to our own interests to let you go. A few more losses like the *Dauphin* and Gurney & Smith may have deserted wharves. If we can prevent that by sending our clerks to sea, why we have used our office force wisely after all.

"Some people say we are too swamped in war debt to afford a navy, but I do not believe we can afford to be without one! Some people

say it threatens the liberties of a free people to maintain a navy, but without a navy our free people are sold into Mohammedan slavery! For my part I can say hurrah for George Washington who keeps hammering away at us with the advice, *that if we want to have commerce we must have a navy!*"

And now the cheer, loud, long and hearty, that Stephen had not given, burst suddenly from every clerk.

CHAPTER IV

GOLD BRAID

THE Fourth of March—Inauguration Day—dawned, blustering and bright, on Philadelphia's Independence Hall. The old capital was gay with fluttering flags and the martial squeak and roll of fife and drum, for John Adams was this day stepping into the office from which George Washington had made his great farewell.

Stephen Decatur, with his chum, Dick Somers, led by Charles Stewart and trailed by Jamie, celebrated the holiday by pushing through the throngs as close to the historic Hall as possible for glimpses of the day's famous personages.

It was as the inaugural crowd was breaking up and scattering across the Square in a bright kaleidoscope of shifting colors, that an incident occurred, slight in itself, but one that Stephen was destined to remember all his life.

A group of people who had enjoyed the special privilege of snug seats within the Senate Chamber, now coming out of doors were greeted

by a rude gust of raw March wind. The very prettiest girl Stephen had ever paused to notice gave a sympathetic gasp as her escort, a pompous young seaman, had his hat swept off in the boisterous wind. She heroically refrained from laughter at the droll figure he cut in dodging vainly hither and yon, hopping and grabbing at the hat that, like a thing alive with mischief, eluded his fingers as it danced along at the wind's caprice.

The hat came cavorting toward our boys, and while Stewart roared with laughter, Stephen with a deft swoop rescued it from underfoot. The disgruntled sailor, resenting the laughter, puffed up, breathless from the chase and now snatched his hat from Stephen with very bad grace, mumbling, "You have mashed it!" He was turning away when Stewart, who had an Irish truculence, clamped an iron hand upon his shoulder and twirled him round, for after all, what was a mere sailor to a captain who at this wight's age had already sailed the seven seas?

"Thank the gentleman!" Stewart commanded, spinning him about so that he came nose to nose with Stephen in the first clash of a lifelong antagonism.

With a glare and a growl the sailor twitched

away, but the pretty girl whom he joined, took pains to thank Stephen with quiet courtesy.

"We may teach him better manners some day when we are in uniform ourselves," said Stewart, still fuming at the slight, but Stephen only laughed and with talk of uniforms all four boys set out for the long walk to the shipyard, where, in spite of the holiday, they hoped to catch a glimpse of Commodore Barry and present their cherished letter.

In this they were not disappointed.

The Commodore, in conference with a group of men, both officials and ships' carpenters, was recognized at once by the conspicuous glory of his Revolutionary uniform donned for the Inaugural occasion, and our boys stood at a respectful distance eyeing him with fascination. Grand indeed he was, from the cockade in his splendid hat to the silver buckles on his shoes! His legs, braced manfully apart, outlined their strength and shapliness in white silk hose, and tight white satin breeches with buckle and bow at the knee. He stood stiffly erect, an imposing figure in his blue long-tailed coat with wide buff lapels, gorgeous with the lavish gold of navy buttons, braid and epaulettes.

The boys had an impatient wait until the Commodore was free and they ventured to

approach him. Stewart, as senior, was spokesman, and presented the letter, to which John Barry gave due attention for he knew Gurney & Smith well. He stood reading it, bushy eyebrows drawn and powdered pig-tail bristling out behind, and, though not a tall man, his martial bearing made the most of every inch so that he seemed enormous to young Jamie Decatur and quite the most impressive person Stephen had ever interviewed.

The lads had often met, upon the Philadelphia streets, George Washington, first President and "Father of His Country." They now confronted the first United States Commodore —step-father of the infant navy. A navy with no ships upon the sea and only three upon the ways!

That his title was scarcely more than an honorary one did not dim his glory, for the boys knew it had been given for conspicuous service in the troublous days of the Revolution, and they waited admiringly while he read.

Finishing the letter and wasting few words, the old sea hawk turned shrewd blue eyes upon his petitioners and said, "I'll think this over. No doubt, some day we'll have a navy. At least ere long we'll have three ships that will need men. It is well our young men stand ready to

serve. But first—" he turned his hand graphically toward the unfinished frigate, "we must build them before you can ship upon them." Thereupon he thrust the letter into a coat-tail pocket and stalked off.

With this meager encouragement the boys had to be satisfied. Humbled by his magnificence, four crestfallen boys watched him march off, little dreaming that one day they might outshine him.

CHAPTER V

STEPHEN MEETS A LADY

The boys lingered about the shipyard, investigating with proprietary interest the frigate's slow completion, as if their very eagerness might hurry it along. Under Charlie Stewart's guidance, Jamie, who had hitherto merely followed his older brother's lead, began to feel the spell of the great ship fall upon him too.

Stephen meanwhile had wandered off by himself and was gazing up spellbound at the skeleton hull towering above him. There was a pleasant smell of chips, sawdust, fresh-sawed lumber and river water, and though it was a holiday the ship was alive with workmen and resounding with the ring of hammers until, to Stephen's imagination, she seemed to take form and with towering sails slip outward to the sea. Then, as if all a part of his own thoughts he heard a low voice near him say, "Isn't it wonderful?" and its heartfelt tone seemed so natural to his state of mind that unthinkingly he answered, "Yes."

He turned and saw beside him the pretty girl with the surly young sailor. It was to the sailor she spoke and not to Stephen at all, but at Stephen's quick confusion she cast him a friendly little smile and with the same gentle courtesy she had shown before said:

"You are quite right, it *is* wonderful!"

Her escort, a little out of patience, drew her attention away. "Well, there's your Virginia pine, Susan," said he, "does it smell like home?"

And at that Stephen forgot himself.

"It isn't Virginia pine," he contradicted, "it's New Jersey oak."

The sailor turned with annoyance and gave Stephen a rude stare as if to emphasize the contrast between his own trim seafaring outfit and Stephen's worn brown coat and shabby dun breeches. "What does a landsman know about ships?" he said contemptuously.

Stephen flushed. "More than a seaman who can't tell oak from pine!" he retorted and though his words were sharp, his tone was soft enough.

So for a second time these two clashed.

"Come!" said the girl peaceably. "You both like ships, don't quarrel about them! Perhaps

he can tell you of their building, James, as you could tell him about sailing."

Belief that Steve could tell him nothing showed all too plainly on the face of the skeptical James.

Thus under the very shadow of the ship began an affair with these three that was to outlast the frigate's fighting days.

"What makes you think it isn't Virginia pine?" asked the girl with another friendly little smile that Stephen had reason to remember, and her voice, as she asked, proclaimed herself a Virginian.

"All our ships are Virginia pine, coppered," maintained James, and his voice too was the voice of a Southerner. He addressed himself very pointedly to Susan alone, as he tried to lead her off. But the girl, though gentle, was spirited. She would not budge till Stephen made reply.

So Stephen answered simply:

"I know what this ship is made of because I got the wood myself."

The sailor uttered a guttural of scornful disbelief and again attempted to lead away his lady as though protecting her from the idle talk of a vulgar fellow. But the girl was perverse.

She surprised Stephen by saying with a little air of authority:

"Why do you say you got the wood? You really *didn't,* you know!"

Stephen was so amazed at this flat statement that he completely forgot the sailor and for the first time in his life gave a girl his entire and earnest attention.

"Why, I certainly did!" he declared, half indignant, half amused. "I'm with the company that furnishes the navy stuff to build ships with. I ought to know! I went to New Jersey myself to get that wood you claim for Virginia. All ships aren't built of Virginia lumber! New Jersey's Essex County is giving wood for a frigate to be named *Essex* because every splinter will be theirs! People are giving oak trees from their own lawns for the *Essex* masts. Other states can build ships besides Virginia!"

The girl's eyes crinkled into a teasing smile at his indignation and her mouth twitched with what Stephen might have interpreted as mischief if he had been keener at reading girls' moods. He was to understand that enigmatic smile later and in another place. Just now she led him on.

"Perhaps, since you know so much about it,"

Paramount Picture. *"Old Ironsides."*

CASTAWAYS RESCUED BY "OLD IRONSIDES" AND INSPECTED ON HER BROAD DECK.

she taunted pleasantly, "you know where our Virginia lumber goes."

He answered her promptly.

"The frigate *Constitution* up in Boston, for one, is getting Virginia oak, red cedar and hard pine."

The forgotten James, no longer restraining himself, now took the girl's arm firmly and urged her to leave with a, "Come, Susan," and to Stephen, "She is not interested in that."

"Why, James Barron!" she contradicted. "I surely am!"

Perhaps to punish Barron's presumption she deliberately turned to Stephen. She looked so provoking, so pretty and companionable, that Stephen was surprised by his own sudden rush of jealousy of the other youth's intimacy with her.

It was at this point that Susan settled things for Stephen forever. "Tell me about your work," she asked, "it sounds so interesting!"

Now when a girl—any girl, says to a man,—any man, "Tell me about your work,—it's so interesting," *and really listens,*—that man is lost. Moreover, if a girl astonishes a man he cannot forget her even if he tries. When Susan had said with sweet positiveness, "You really

did not get that wood, you know," Stephen was astonished, and, besides, he was going to make no effort to forget her. So, when she now used the infallible formula, "Tell me about your work," although Stephen did not realize it, his die was cast. He began to talk to her as he had never talked to any one before, and Susan listened with a genuine interest, never taking her eyes from his. They both forgot "the party of the third part." Comments flew back and forth between them until they seemed to the disgusted Barron fairly entranced in conversation.

Somehow, to Susan, Stephen could express in words things he had only dreamed before. She understood his feeling for the sea. Girl though she was he knew at once that here was a kindred spirit.

Now some attract by charm or wit, others by looks alone, but the surest, strongest magnet is true understanding which draws men irresistibly even to the homeliest girls, and Stephen now faced a girl with both loveliness and understanding. His feelings, thereafter, were already foreordained!

He found himself talking rapidly of Barbary pirates, Algerine slavery, the *Dauphin* and the *Betsy*.

"The *Betsy's* cargo of Indian hemp is going on up to the Camden rope-walks and then we ship it to Boston for the *Constitution's* rigging," he was saying when he halted embarrassed lest all this was, as Barron declared, uninteresting to a girl. To her this might seem a dull rehearsal of routes and cargoes, though to him it seemed a prime adventure to sail a load of hemp out from under pirates' noses and to make that hemp into rope to rig a ship to fight those pirates.

The girl, however, caught the spirit of it.

"Go on," she said.

"That's all!" he ended, smiling in turn at her enthusiasm. "Only we are joining the navy and if we can't get appointments we'll ship as seamen."

The forgotten Barron gave a snort, but neither noticed him.

"Here come the other fellows now!" Stephen said, reluctant of interruption.

The girl smiled again. "Of such is the navy made!" said she gayly. "You are 'live oak,' I think," she said with a twinkle, "and the two slim ones are red cedar and hard pine," as Dick and Jamie appeared, "but what is the tall one behind them?"

"Iron, perhaps," said Stephen, looking at

Stewart, and he spoke more prophetically than he knew.

"I wish I could go too!" the girl declared suddenly.

"You!" laughed Stephen. "But you're a girl!"

For a second time she had surprised him.

Susan stamped her foot. "A girl!" she said with sudden fire. "Don't you suppose girls feel the things you feel? And do you think it's pleasant to be cooped at home forever because you're '*nothing but a girl*'?"

Stephen really had never put himself into a girl's viewpoint before, but he felt a prompt sympathy. He himself had chafed against the "coop" of clerkship and had broken loose. She seemed to feel exactly as he did, but could never be as free. He wanted to talk this idea over,—they found so much to say,—but there was no time to say more, for Susan's mother, appearing from a stroll with friends about the shipyard, now approached, and James Barron appealed to her.

"I've been trying to get Susan to come," he began accusingly, but the mother with a pleasant word and gesture appeased him and withdrew her daughter from the stranger. By a searching look the older woman was convinced

at once by Stephen's honest face, his charm of manner and graceful courtesy, that stranger though he was this lad was surely as well bred as the sulky Barron.

"He has been telling me about shipbuilding, mother," Susan explained.

"And I suppose," her mother answered with an indulgent smile, "that you have been boring him to death with tales of our lumber for this frigate's sister ship."

Then mother and daughter moved away, leaving Stephen puzzled. Turning to join them, James Barron said to Stephen tartly:

"Miss Wheeler has reason to know far more of shipbuilding than you suppose." With this cryptic remark he left Stephen discomfited at thought of having no surety that he would ever see this girl again. She did not even know his name!

CHAPTER VI

AND SEES HER AGAIN

The rough March wind had lost its rawness and taken on a gentleness and fragrant warmth as the lumber brig *Nancy Lee* spread sail on Chesapeake Bay.

Stephen Decatur found long, idle days on deck all too full of a strange restlessness at the persistent memory of pretty Susan Wheeler. No matter how determinedly he forced his thoughts to other things, they always slipped from his control and raced straight back to her, and he went about his daily tasks conscious more and more of an odd sense of loneliness and loss.

Sometimes it angered him that a mere girl could take so complete possession of his senses that his very thoughts were no longer his own. Sometimes it pleased him to revel in this new tenderness that so pervaded him, hoping that kind chance might throw him once more in Susan's way. At other times he went about cherishing a sort of pleasant melancholy in the thought that though they had only met to part

forever he would remember her always. He liked to go off by himself, to lean against the rail and lose himself in imagined deeds of valor that made him always a hero in his lady's eyes, for after all he was but eighteen and it was springtime. Strange that in his wildest and most extravagant dreams he was never so bold and picturesquely daring as he proved to be in real events still hidden in the future! And, so, between indulging himself in these sensations one moment and fighting against them the next, Stephen found himself both resenting and enjoying that sweet unhappiness which often comes, mysteriously, with spring. Poor Stephen had never been afflicted thus before! It was all, he thought, because there was nothing else on board to fill his mind, and he began to grow impatient to dock and get briskly to work which he thought would surely shake this mooning off. He began to look forward each day to landing, more feverishly certain that by getting away from the ship he could get away, too, from the thoughts that never let him rest. Yet he often rallied himself with a good sane grin and the conviction that if his mother knew she would promptly prescribe the annual dose of sulphur and molasses!

When at last they did dock and he was just

beginning to feel triumphantly himself, the first thing that caught his eye along the waterfront was a line of weather-beaten warehouses bearing the sign:

SAMUEL WHEELER

TOBACCO AND LUMBER

And back flew his thoughts to Susan! Could this be the same Wheeler? She had surely been a Virginian! And had the March wind that had first brought them together blown his ship South to her now? His business was with the same Samuel Wheeler, but the warehouses were closed when he landed on the deserted dock, for it was Sunday.

Norfolk harbor bristled with the spars of ships at anchor. Here lay privateersmen, converted makeshift vessels armed as corvettes and sloops of war, all poking the ominous snouts of grim black guns above the clusters of peaceful and defenseless craft. Here too were great merchantmen painted like warships with white port stripes and black port lids to look

like cannon as threats to Barbary and Caribbean pirates, in our first naval camouflage.

Tired of the *Nancy Lee* and too restless to stay on board any longer, Stephen wandered around Norfolk's quiet streets with a boy's inquisitive interest in new places, and so strolling about, he came at length to old St. Paul's.

The little church was shaggy even then with English ivy, and its scar from a Revolutionary cannon ball caught his interest. He paused, and then, feeling perhaps a little home-sick despite his brave dreams of voyage and adventure, he went inside. It was the most familiar thing that he could do in a strange place,—so many Sunday mornings he and James had knelt in church beside their mother and prayed for those at sea. He settled down a little shyly in a rear pew and watched people slowly filing in. After the rocking of the ship with its recent rough tossing off Cape Charles, the church seemed queerly still and solid.

The service began to drone along, but though Stephen went punctiliously through the motions of it, he found his thoughts slipping from his command as badly here as at sea. He made a willful effort to master them through the prayers. The appeal for "The President of

the United States and all others in authority"—(with the second President just inaugurated)—was a new enough change from "With thy favor behold our moft gracious Sovereign Lord, King George," and—"Blefs their Royal Highneffes, Frederic the Prince of Wales, the Princefs of Wales, the Duke, the Princeffes, the Iffue of the Prince and Princefs of Wales and All the Royal Family"—to cause a little stir of pride and satisfaction as the rector rumbled it!

But kneeling there with his forehead comfortably upon his hands, Stephen found church a convenient place for reveries, and to tell the truth, he was not thinking of John Adams.

He turned his face uneasily at last to dismiss his thoughts and suddenly just ahead of him, across the aisle, saw Susan.

It was so unexpected, so unbelievable, that he thought he must imagine it. He closed his eyes, indulging in pretense that it was true, then opened them cautiously, fearful of spoiling the illusion. But there was nothing spoiled, —he was surer than before and it was better than pretense, for it was true,—there was Susan, and no one else,—not one who looked like her and turned out not to be,—no, Susan herself even prettier than he had imagined her

to be! There she was, quite real and perfectly at home, apparently kneeling in her own family pew, dainty and devout, beside her father and mother—at least Stephen supposed it must be they,—and if anything was needed to make Stephen surer, then beside her was the ever-present Barron. Heat prickled over Stephen at sight of him. Why should James Barron kneel in the family pew?

It seemed to Stephen that the service of the Church of England is unnecessarily long, and that it would never end and let him make his way to Susan. But in another minute, contrarily, he thought it was entirely too short and that it would be better to stay quiet there and look at Susan indefinitely than to learn that Barron had a right to kneel beside her.

When the congregation finally rose he scrambled to his feet and stood gazing abstractedly, and forgot to sit down until embarrassed by the glares of two worthy old ladies in his pew. He then hastily sat and forgot to get on his feet again when everybody else was up and so felt doubly foolish when he noticed it.

The back view of Susan's head proved distracting to Stephen, with her little curls at the nape of her neck and alluring loops of bonnet

ribbons. She was in pink-sprigged white with ruffles at her neck as light as flower petals and she looked like nothing so much, Stephen thought, as a spray of apple blossoms. That Stephen was not alone in admiration of her was all too plain from the slant of Barron's shoulders which tipped irresistibly Susanwards in spite of her own prim straightness.

Everybody was rising for a hymn, and Stephen's two old ladies, convinced now that he did not know the service, made a great to-do finding the place and offering it to him, but he had seen something that made him blind to all the old ladies in the Old Dominion.

Susan was sharing Barron's hymnal and Barron had slipped a surreptitious thumb over hers. Had the old ladies seen this no doubt they would have bridled indignantly at "the way young people act now-a-days!" But as it was they were ruffled enough at Stephen's disregard of their proffered hymnal and could only murmur that to-day's young men lacked the manners of those of yesteryear!

Stephen, meanwhile, like any young man of any year in the world, stood glowering at his rival and finding some difficulty in swallowing! Susan, to his vast relief, soon turned very prettily to share her mother's book instead.

At last the service ended and Stephen, near the door, was quickly up and out, jealously watching the aisle, and his old ladies were not too old nor harsh to understand by the intensity of his eyes why he had not found his places.

The church now seemed full of sailors and officers too, until Stephen was desperately sure that every man from every ship in the harbor was blocking Susan's progress to the door. It did not raise his spirits greatly to see how popular Miss Wheeler was with them all and he wondered suspiciously just how many of them had come to church for proper worship only.

But, finally, she really reached the door and saw him standing there so shy and eager, with such wistfulness upon his face that she cried out, recognizing him:

"Why, mother, look! There's that nice Philadelphia boy!" and broke away a little unconventionally to greet him with a quickly outstretched hand. She seemed almost as glad as he to meet again.

"What are you doing here?" Her soft voice gave the query all the range of pleasure, curiosity, and friendliness.

Other men were in the background now and neighbors, passing out with smiles and nods,

seemed to think it nothing at all unusual for Susan to be greeted fervently by strange young men.

"I've come for your Virginia pine, of course," he said, reluctantly relinquishing her hand over which he had bowed low, smiling in sheer delight at having her glad to see him. "I'm to get it from Samuel Wheeler; that couldn't be any relation to you?"

She laughed, pleased in turn that he was glad to see her. "It's only a relation by marriage," she teased. "Samuel Wheeler is my father!"

It was plain that James Barron did not enjoy having the Philadelphian bob up to monopolize Susan again, but it was even plainer that Susan would not let James interrupt her now. So he fidgeted at a distance.

"When am I going to see you again?" Stephen was demanding.

"If you are doing business with my father, I should think it likely you might see me again!" She had the most provoking voice, half teasing, half consoling.

"Don't you even want to know my name?" Stephen asked helplessly.

"Certainly I do! Tell me and come meet my father now."

"It's Stephen Decatur and I hope you are going to say it a good many times!"

"You may be from Philadelphia, but you can say pretty things as well as a Virginian," she approved. "Come," and she led him back toward the spot where James Barron stood scowling near her parents. "Mother, this is Stephen Decatur; don't you remember we met him before? Father, Mr. Decatur has come to get ships' lumber from you."

Susan's parents, goodness knows, were well enough used to her collection of attentive young men, but there was something earnestly insistent about this new one that made them take shrewd stock of him, at once. They could not but be satisfied with the unmistakable air of good breeding about this courteous boy with his fine thoughtful face and the easy grace of his tall well-built figure. Stephen had a distinctive charm of person all the more appealing now in his open thralldom to their daughter, from whom he could scarcely take his eyes. This was the land and day of generous invitations and the Wheelers were not slow to extend theirs to a boy far from home,—as distance counted then when it could not be clipped short by quick and easy travel. Susan's echo of their

invitation held a little more—he liked to hope—than mere customary hospitality.

They had all stepped outside the church now where there was a stir among the horses waiting in the grove, a scraping and turning of carriage wheels as colored coachmen backed out vehicles and a creak of saddle leather as young men loosed impatient riding horses that stamped and stood tied by bridle reins to "swinging branches" overhead.

Susan's coach now drove up in turn, with a flourish of whip by a black and pompous driver (gorgeous in cockaded hat and brass-buttoned green coat), who presided from his high seat over four frisky bays. A slim brown footman swung down from his box to open the cream-colored door and let down the folding steps.

At the vision of blue cushions and gold tassels within, Stephen thought, disheartened, that the Wheelers were magnificently rich!

"I am going to see you again, then," he declared, "but you hop about so from place to place," he complained, "that I never know where to find you next!"

"I don't hop about," she contradicted sweetly. "I've only come home from school in Philadelphia for the spring holidays."

James Barron interrupted here with an im-

patient gesture to help her into the coach, but, to the secret amusement of both her parents, Stephen skillfully brushed him aside and helped her in himself.

"You are the one who hops!" she accused him merrily from the window. "You did not tell me you were coming to Virginia!" and as the coach gave a lurch on its high springs and rolled away, she caught Stephen's quick, low answer;

"I have not told you a good many things that I am going to, some day!"

CHAPTER VII

HEART OF OAK FOR SHIPS

STEPHEN was at the warehouse on Monday morning early enough to meet Mr. Wheeler as he rode in on horseback from his home beyond Norfolk.

"An early bird, I see," he greeted Stephen, dismounting and tossing his reins to a pickaninny. "Come into the office and you may catch your worm at once." He spread Stephen's papers out upon a fine old English table that served him as a desk.

"Now this lot," said he, tapping one sheet, "you can have any time you send your ship around for it. We have kept that seasoning in salt water for two years. It is ripe for use now and it is still floating in our timber dock. This lot"—indicating another paper—"is bunched in rafts and is being floated down the James River now with the spring flood,—but *this*"—he shook his head—"has to be hauled out of the woods and if Gurney & Smith think we can hurry that along it is just as well they sent some one to see the situation and

to do their own hurrying. Now, the thing for you to do, young man, is to get a horse and ride out there and see things for yourself. I will send a man with you who knows the way and then you will return to our home for dinner. Mrs. Wheeler is expecting you to spend the night. You will find it too long a ride back to Norfolk."

A gleam of delight brightened Stephen's expression, much as he strove to keep it seriously intent on business.

"The roads are very bad just now," Mr. Wheeler went on, dispatching a negro for saddle horses, "and it is my belief that nothing can hurry those lumber wagons out of the mud before summer has baked the ground hard and dry. At this time of the spring the roads are so sticky with tough moist clay as to be impassable for heavy hauling. There are plenty of mud holes deep enough to break a horse's leg, and there are wet stretches where the mud is as thin and sloppy as gruel through which wheels sink to the hubs. If Congress wants ships it cannot cancel timber orders one moment and then next demand lumber in haste when spring mud blocks Virginia woods. We do what we can about these roads. They have raised the requirements of every landowner

along a highway. Every able-bodied man or boy must give time to working the roads or supply slave labor four times a year to keep the highways passable. But even with this you will find the roads not fit for hauling until the mud dries out."

As the slave now appeared with the horses Mr. Wheeler gave Stephen some further directions, and with instructions to his negro, who was to accompany Stephen, sent them on their way while it was still early morning.

Stephen rode off with a blithe heart, for the pleasantest sort of day lay before him,—a long ride in spring sunshine through forest roads, and the happy prospect of an evening with Susan to look forward to at the day's end.

The horses picked their way through Norfolk streets where the mud was so deep and thick even in town that sawed-off lengths of tree trunks had been driven down for stepping blocks at every street crossing.

Stephen and his escort were soon out of town, however, and well on their way into the country before the sun grew hot. Stephen eagerly urged his mount along at a brisk trot which was possible by keeping the horse on the firm grass-roots at the road-edge. The colored man, who followed at a respectful distance, allowed this

for a mile or so and then broke his silence with: " 'Scusin' my sayin' so, Marster, but we has a right smart of a ways to go and no horse can't hold dis gait all day."

Now Stephen had been well tutored in all things that counted as the best education for the cultured youth of his day. He was skilled in swordsmanship, in handling duelling pistols, and was thoroughly at home in the saddle. But he had been taught to ride in the English way, rising to the trot, and after watching him "post" thus in the stirrups for some time his escort warned him, "You is gwine tire yousef to deff befo' noon ridin' dat-away," for in Virginia riding was not so much a social accomplishment as a necessity in covering long distances with least wear and tear on horse and rider.

A little piqued by this criticism, Stephen had the good sense and good nature nevertheless to suggest that the man, knowing the roads, distance and horses better, lead the way and set the pace. It was this readiness to learn of others, no matter how humble, that in time helped to make Stephen Decatur a truly great commander. Accordingly the negro taught Stephen to relax in the saddle, and showed him that these horses were broken to paces different

from the usual English gaits. They were soon swinging along at a gentle mile-eating jog with little jar to the rider.

They traveled thus single file past mile after mile of woodland broken only here and there by some plantation when the forest odors of wet dead leaves, new sap and spring blossoms was broken by the smell of damp rich earth freshly plowed. Sometimes miles of fields stretched to the wooded horizon dotted with the bent backs of negroes setting out young tobacco plants.

The homes on these plantations were set far back from the road always in groves that were carefully preserved around the houses,—no matter how bare the fields were cleared,—to give a cool shade to porch and window through torrid summer heat. Some of these homes overlooked the James and their own tobacco docks. But now Stephen was heading away from the river towards the deep woods and one of the last farms passed was pointed out to him as "Wood's Edge," the Wheeler home, near the Deer Lick Crossroads. He gazed long and curiously at the place, but except for a sense of busy life beyond the barns and outbuildings he saw no one. From time to time now they passed gangs of negroes working the sloppy

road, digging drains and busily filling in holes. They sang as they shoveled, keeping time and tune together in a way that reminded Stephen of sailors' chanteys. One group called out to them to beware a hole ahead and a little further on they came upon a wide puddle stretching across the road with a young sapling stuck upright in the middle as a danger signal. "Somebody done lost a horse dar," muttered the negro. "Always stick in a sapling whar's a bad hole." They accordingly picked their way gingerly around a high, woodsy bank where crushed bushes and undergrowth testified to it as a turn-out for wagons as well. The wet hollow beyond this was filled in with rough pine poles laid side-by-side across the road to form a corduroy for some distance, over which the horses minced, fearful of slipping on loose bark or rolling log and snapping shin or fetlock.

The squeal and groan of wagon wheels laboring through this track now sounded at a turn in the road and in another moment a truly remarkable sight came into view. First appeared the lowered, swaying horns of tugging oxen, two abreast, around the turn they came two by two, one pair after another, all straining at a common load urged on by shouts and

cries of negroes who ran alongside plying their goads here and there to direct the beasts in and out around hole and gully, and upon banks out of bad mire. Fifty horned heads in all, fifty swinging tails, and behind the long team a load of great oak logs mounted on a squat skeleton truck with huge solid wooden wheels.

"Dar yo' ship lumber," said Stephen's guide, ending with a throaty chuckle, "Jes let 'im get kotched in yon hole and nary a ship'll see dem logs till 'ole sea freezes over."

Indeed it did seem as if the load would lodge in the mud and never budge again. But with halts and starts and exhortations and whip lashings, and divers shouts that made the woods ring, the fifty steers slowly and perilously dragged the load up and out of the mud around the banks, crashing through bush and brambles and down the sleek clay sides of an abrupt bank into the roadbed again, so slowly that half an hour passed in negotiating a single mud hole, and the corduroy road lay yet before them while the shout of the whip leader and the answering echo of the gad boys again reminded Stephen of the chanteyman and sailor's unisons.

This great team and its crew was under the direction of a young white lad, mounted on a mud-stained horse. He was not as old as

Stephen, for these were the days when boys did the work of men before the down was on their lips. Stephen addressed him and the two sat their horses conferring while oxen and drivers struggled on. He told Stephen that they hoped to make eight miles a day and had twenty miles to go before they reached the river where the crew would float the logs to Norfolk. When they parted Stephen waited to watch the shambling cattle trail along with creeping and lurching load out of sight around the next woody turn. It seemed a long, long way to Boston shipyards that morning.

A glance at sun and shadow now told Stephen's guide that it was well past noon and after fording a noisy little stream they came to a farm house where they turned in and explained their journey. While Stephen was promptly set down to dinner, his man was sent to loosen bridles and girths. After watering and feeding the horses he was supplied with a heaped plate which he enjoyed out of doors at the woodpile in conversation with a group of house slaves who gathered to gossip while he ate. Such was the customary hospitality to wayfarers for which Stephen, now tired from the unaccustomed exercise, was heartily thankful. What he had to tell these isolated farm

people of the world outside, of Norfolk, Philadelphia, the Inauguration, the sea and rumors of war, seemed more than to repay them for the rest and bountiful meal so freely offered.

The horses were rested for an hour here and then saddles were flung on again and the ride resumed. The highway along which they rode was hardly more than a blazed trail with more hoofprints than wagon ruts and the blaze appearing on trees along the way still showed here and there the two nicks indicating King George the Second's Highway. But now the riders turned off the highway and cut directly into the deep woods where the trail was only an obscure path over broken-down saplings, winding crookedly between the trunks of odorous pines that towered tall above them. These pines stretched away as far as the eye could reach in columned aisles, clear of underbrush and carpeted flat and smooth with brown needles across which the sun fell as dimly as in cathedral cloisters. These pines were very still and the noon warmth, bringing out the aromatic tang of resin, roused no twitter of birds that made the other woodlands ring.

Here it was solemn and silent with only an occasional tick of falling needle or scuttle of frightened lizard to emphasize the quiet.

It seemed lonelier to Stephen than the sea, and its magnificence roused him to mention it to his companion, who, unimpressed, replied: "Thisshyer ain't nothin' but old-field pine. It's tall, but it's second growth. You wait twill you gets to de ole woods, them trees for your ships is a million years old." His promise was well fulfilled.

The pines began to dwindle and gave way at last to a greenwood of original growth that had never known ax before. Here stood mighty oaks, row upon row, with widespread limbs and trunks that three men could not girdle, a world of wild life in the high and serried branches.

No sooner had they reached the greenwood than the stillness of the pines ended in a murmur of insects and birds, and a red deer bounded across their path. Dodging down flat on his horse's neck to avoid a low-hanging limb that would have scraped him out of the saddle, Stephen saw an Indian arrowhead imbedded in that limb and stopped to cut it loose for a souvenir, although he was laughed at with the remark, "Pick them things up by de basketful anywheres."

In the distance now there was the creak of wood and wheel and faint shouts of men's voices and the squeal and shriek of whipsaws

eating into live logs, indicating that at last they were nearing the lumber camp.

Now came the rank strong stable smells, the crash and grind of wheel against stumps and crushed saplings, as vast slow teams drew out of the clearing. And then, getting into the thick of it, Stephen met a stalled team with wheels sunk in mud holes and forty red oxen with outstretched patient necks and straining flanks heaving and struggling to pull loose the load under the lashes of an active crew of drivers.

A long line of black slaves hauled on ropes fastened to the stubborn wheels, pulling with rhythmic song like sailors at anchor cables. To the solo shout of their leader, these slaves responded with chorused cries, flinging their sinewy bodies nearly flat along the ropes in a straining tug-of-war. The wheels gave way and with yells of victory black and white men whooped on the team which plunged forward so suddenly that one ox fell. There was a rush of men to the rescue and the whole scene reminded Stephen of nothing so much as a swarm of ants struggling with an immense ungainly crumb!

Then the camp appeared through a clearing. Stack upon stack of giant logs reared tepee-like where they dried. Criss-crossed hollow

squares built up fence-like, of logs stripped and squared like ties, dotted the devastated space where only mammoth stumps now showed the standing places of old oaks that had given up their forest lives for frigate timber.

With five thousand acres of forest land to draw from the woodmen had been prodigal in chipping away all but the solid heart of oak for use, heart that was as hard as iron, but with more spring. Although the hand of man had hacked and sawed a sorry clearing in the heart of the forest, tragic with fallen trunks of century-old trees, the woods seemed to be waiting, silent and mighty, ready to encroach upon that clearing and claim it patiently again as soon as these little human beings left. Men, after all, had only made a slight scar upon the vast woodland.

It seemed to Stephen as if this primeval forest might have seen the very beginning of the world and he wondered whimsically whether these trees, once wrought into warships wet with brine and blood, would ever dream of Southern sun and peaceful, nesting birds!

An interview with the men in charge of this lumber camp soon convinced Stephen that the frigate *Constitution* would not get her deck

planks soon, and somehow Stephen no longer objected to delay. He felt the desire to hasten off upon salt water gone in a great contentment at the need for staying here.

His only impatience now was to see Susan.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM THE OLD DOMINION

Turning his face at last back toward Deer Lick Crossroads, Stephen found himself tired out. The shadows were growing long, the unaccustomed all-day ride, after many days and nights on a tossing ship, left him feeling so stiff and dizzy that he began to fear he might not be able to enjoy the evening after all.

His guide noticed his weary droop in the saddle and though it must be admitted that the negro had left Norfolk with a mild contempt for the young greenhorn, a day's contact with the friendly boy, who showed such a genuine interest in everything he was told, and who completely lacked any overbearing air of superiority, had won this slave man, as others were invariably won, to an actual warmth of feeling for Stephen and a desire to make his way easier. Indeed Stephen Decatur never met but four people in the world who managed to hold a lasting enmity against him: James Barron and the Barbary Bashaws.

"Hm, hmm," grunted the negro, weary him-

self, and ready to ease the last miles of the trip, "been ridin' straddle too long; 'bliged to rest." He flung his right foot and stirrup across the saddle to the left side and slouched along sideways, motioning to Stephen to do likewise.

The occasional horsemen they met towards sundown were also riding sideways with fatigue, and, though Stephen thought it looked rather silly, he tried it willingly enough and found such relief from pressure on leg and hip as to make the rest of the ride seem not so unendurable after all.

There was more or less familiarity in the turns of the road now, so that the way back seemed shorter than it had that morning, and before Stephen realized that he had covered the distance, he was at the Crossroads and saw two figures approaching, also riding sidesaddle.

These riders had every reason for their side saddles, for it was apparent even at a distance that they were women. In another moment Stephen recognized Susan and forgot that he was tired.

She wore a delightful little plumed hat and her long plum-colored habit nearly swept the ground. She sat as straight as an Indian arrow and had such control of her restless horse that

Stephen could well believe, afterwards, the tale of her racing horses with a friend through the woods when, though her saddle girth snapped, she kept her horse on a dead run to a triumphant finish, balancing so lightly and evenly, that no drag on the pommel tipped her and the loose saddle to the ground.

Behind her now rode a colored maid bunched up upon a tall bay and clutching a large basket.

"I thought we might meet," Susan greeted him. "Sappho and I have been over to the Tollivers for slippery elm bark and a jar of goosegrease. Their old Granny Nanny keeps all kinds of remedies in her cabin—she's better than any doctor,—and we haven't had any goosegrease on hand since a red fox got at our geese and chickens."

"Who in the world are you going to rub with that smelly stuff?" asked Stephen, laughing.

"Our twins! We have cunning new twins that belong to our cook. I'm never going to let Father sell them. It's as bad as drowning kittens to sell all our babies and I tell Father I shan't part with another one. He promised not to sell any more, but now he says twins are more than he bargained for, but I tell him I am going to keep them to play with and make up for being an only child myself. The littlest

twin is croupy, so Sappho and I are going to dose him. You see Father has his business and Mother has the house and servants to manage and when I am at home I have charge of all the babies. I tell Father that he ought to make them free and he does get so out of patience with me. He says that's what he gets for sending me away to school. He thinks girls get dreadfully radical notions at school and when I tell him Thomas Jefferson has freed all *his* slaves he only says girls should not bother with politics! It puts me out so!" she complained impatiently with a pretty little pout. "Father thinks I'd soon be sorry if they were free and I had nobody to wait on me, but you'd never leave me, would you, Sappho?" she appealed, familiarly, "even if I did turn you free?"

"Naw'm," giggled the girl with a broad smile that showed she had no more desire than Stephen himself to leave Miss Susan Wheeler.

So, chattering away, Susan presently turned in at her home gate and led the way up the lane that led to the Wheeler house standing in its grove of giant oaks. Half a dozen bare-legged frolicking colored children came scampering to meet them and to take the horses, and as Stephen walked up a rose-bordered path past the small log "office" in the corner of the yard,

he had a glimpse in the twilight of a cluster of carriage houses and other outbuildings—barns, stables, corncribs and the henhouse that the red fox had robbed.

In orderly lanes appeared the cabins used for spinning and quilting, a carpenter shop, cook house and an ice house with low roof sloping to the grass where laughing pickaninnies were now at play, scuttling up and sliding merrily down upon the shingles.

"It's a pretty big place, isn't it," Stephen commented, wondering if he would ever be able to offer Susan any home half so expansive.

"Why, no, it isn't particularly big now," said she, unconcerned. "I like it here in summer, but in winter I'd like to live in Norfolk. They are always having the loveliest balls there. Such fun!" And having thus disquieted Stephen, she added: "Father doesn't farm, so the tenants just raise what we need for the house and barns and gardens. Oh! Here is Mother."

In another moment the comfortable hospitality of the place had enveloped the tired boy with a soothing sense of such ease and peace as often after haunted his wistful memory on nights in storms at sea.

Although miserable, mud-stained and so cramped at first that his stiff legs could

scarcely walk, Stephen was refreshed by a dash of cold well water in a blue bedroom bowl and a glimpse of a plump feather bed rising under its blue and white handwoven spread, inviting with the faint clean smell of lavender.

He laughed to see from his window the colored children, shrilly summoned from their coasting on the ice house roof, run to the cook house to receive hot plates and covered dishes with which they raced with all speed across the yard to reach the family dining room before the plates got cold! Back and forth across the yard the little procession continued, while Susan's voice sounded, scolding and laughing at them, until finally supper was all safely upon the table.

Stephen did not keep that supper waiting long and it must be noted that his feelings each time he glanced across the table at Susan did not interfere in the least with his healthy appetite. He had a dim impression of Susan's gracious mother plying him with food, of Mr. Wheeler rumbling on about the lumber trade, but not until the last crumb was gone did his exhaustion wholly vanish and his mind clear up enough to really take on distinct impressions.

The impressions, however, of the evening that followed never faded.

Leaving the dining room they crossed a broad porch joining two houses that, built at different times, were now combined to make one large and rambling dwelling. The early spring evening was chill enough to warrant a pleasant fire of fat-pine in the mammoth fireplace that was the chief feature. It stretched almost across the width of the room, broad enough to hold young tree trunks, and the draft from it on windy days without a fire was enough, Mr. Wheeler jested, "to draw the nails out of the floor." So much broader was the fireplace itself than the spread of andirons that small benches were set in on either side of the fire dogs, where Susan as a little girl had often sat upright and gazed up the wide mouth of the chimney at the stars. Mantelpiece, like the flooring, was heart of oak, fastened with nails hand-wrought by slave blacksmiths. The chimney itself was built of brick, a novelty in this new country where there were no kilns, for all the brick had been brought over from England as ship ballast. Across the fireplace hung guns: old ones that had defended the first settlers in this house from prowling Indians,

others used against the British and some now only loaded for wild turkey.

A framed parchment on the wall proclaimed in precise penmanship that George First by the grace of God, King, etc., had granted this land to the first American Wheeler. This was the room, with its English portraits and graceful English chairs and its polished tables piled with dark leather-bound books, where Stephen spent his first evening with Susan. When she sat down in the firelight at her harp, accompanying herself sweetly as she sang "Drink to Me Only," it was naturally all a picture that Stephen could not forget.

The talk fell, of course, to ships, especially to the *Constitution* and her sister frigates, and it was plain that Susan's father had talked to her of these as if she had been a son, for it became plainer and plainer that she was more than well-informed on ship-building until Stephen blushed at thought of his patronizing explanations to her at the shipyard in Philadelphia.

"You know," said she, "Joshua Humphreys is building these ships and his name is to a ship what Stradivarius' is to a violin. He has gone to the French to study their ships' grace and curve of line to give them more speed than the stodgy English ships, though he wants the Brit-

ish strength. Besides that, he is using new ideas of his own. Father says he is sloping the *Constitution's* hull inwards from the water line to make it roll easier in a seaway. And it is all fastened together not with iron nails but wooden pins that give it both strength and spring. Oh, I do believe I would rather build a ship than make a violin!" and Susan's face glowed so with enthusiasm that Stephen thanked his lucky stars that his heart was truly with these ships and that he could respond honestly to her enthusiasm.

"You see now why she cornered you at the shipyard," laughed her mother, knitting busily in her armchair by the hearth.

"Yes, you shall see now why I told you you did not get the wood for those ships! Let me take him out to see the stumps of the triple pines, mother."

"But I did get it for the *United States,*" persisted Stephen as they went outside and left the porch.

"Oh, for the *United States* perhaps, yes," she agreed indulgently, "but we gave our best trees for masts for the *Constitution* and she will be the very finest frigate in all the world when she is launched. Come."

She led Stephen across the lawn in the star-

light, and down the lane, and there near the cow pasture gate stood three mammoth stumps, mute evidence of the mighty trees gone that a great warship might sail.

"This is the country where warship timber comes from," Susan said proudly. "Even England's ships-of-the-line are built of Virginia oak and hard yellow pine. They say that when the trees for Lord Nelson's flagship, the *Victory,* were cut back in '65, that they hauled out the wood for it right past here with a hundred oxen to a team.

"We gave many trees from our own place when Congress first called for ships, and I cried when they crashed down. It is as sad as death, don't you think, to see an oak tree fall?"

Stephen began to feel that more emotion went into the building of a ship than he had dreamed and he was sure of it when Susan said next:

"Perhaps you'll get appointed to the *Constitution* herself, who knows, and then whenever you climb the rigging to her masts you can think of Virginia and these stumps out by our pasture."

"If I go on feeling like this," stammered poor Stephen, "I shall never see *any* masts without thinking of you!"

CHAPTER IX

STEPHEN FIGHTS A DUEL AND MAKES A FRIEND

It became only too clear to Stephen that Susan was so accustomed to such tender statements that she regarded them as mere pleasantries of conversation and never for an instant suspected the effort such remarks cost him, nor the way Stephen turned hot and cold as he uttered them.

James Barron made pretty speeches with no effort at all and had been doing so frequently and fluently for years, for when he and his elder brother Samuel were off their ships and at home they lived too close to Susan for Stephen's peace of mind.

Nor was Barron alone in paying his compliments. The cluster of men around Susan that Stephen had envied that first morning in church was only an indication of her popularity in Norfolk society.

In spite of the way other men seemed to Stephen to monopolize Susan's time, he found many a pleasant opportunity for horseback rides with her through the spring woods—

(the faithful Sappho always trotting along behind)—as the long slow teams of oxen toiled steadily down King George's highway toward the water.

With the end of Lent these meetings at Deer Lick and Wood's Edge grew less frequent as Susan spent more and more time in town in the gay company of school friends. Strange to say, Stephen suddenly felt that the loading of the *Nancy Lee* in the harbor required his supervision more urgently than the lumber teams deep in the forest!

It was partly through Susan that Stephen fell in with an agreeable group of young men from the privateers in Norfolk harbor,—men whose friendships were to last his lifetime.

Though envious at first of the semi-heroic glamour of their calling (that certainly proved engaging in Susan's girlish eyes!), Stephen soon found himself so drawn to these men in spite of himself that he would have counted his trip to Norfolk well worth while even without the charming Miss Wheeler.

Among these men was a young ship's officer who reminded Stephen forcibly of Charlie Stewart in that he had been at sea since a youngster, commanded merchant vessels while still in his teens and was now an officer aboard

a privateer though hardly older than Stewart. His impulsive spirit of patriotism and adventure that had prompted his enlistment was exactly like the venturesome Charlie's.

There was, however, one striking difference between Charlie Stewart and this William Bainbridge, for upon Bainbridge unfailingly fell every possible kind of calamity until his fellows nicknamed him "Bad Luck Bainbridge" and rallied him upon the certainty of his continual ill fortune, an ill fortune, by the way, that was to intermesh strangely with Stephen's great adventure. Charlie Stewart, on the other hand, led a charmed life, so that he emerged from countless close scrapes unscathed to the end of his days.

Bainbridge's close companion was a fellow shipmate, an Isaac Hull, a thin, sallow, humorous youth with whom Stephen struck up quite a friendship. Hull's chief diversion ashore was good naturedly baiting a young English sailor, whose warship, damaged by storms at sea, had put into the harbor for repairs. Hull delighted to jeer at this sailor, Richard Dacres, for the United States' triumph over Britain in the late Revolution. Dacres, in return, would scoff at "the Colonies," depreciating the value of their loss to England, discounting American valor

and crediting France with treachery in the whole affair.

The two were constantly bickering thus good-naturedly whenever they met, and after such tiffs, arm in arm, would march off to the nearest inn to carry on their mild warfare over mugs of ale. Sitting opposite one another agreeably quaffing, Hull's dark thin face and Richard Dacres' round rosy one were often seen together. Dacres was a well-liked youngster, with fair hair and almost childish good humor in his laughing blue eyes,—the very type of fine young Englishman who had been bred to "Fear God, honor the King and hate a Frenchman like the devil."

The lasting friendship of these three, "Bad-luck" Bainbridge, Isaac Hull and Dicky Dacres, Stephen brought back from Virginia, nor did any of these Americans lose their honest liking for jolly Dick Dacres, though Hull met him later over blood-stained decks.

Upon the whole Stephen so enjoyed himself that he began to feel content to stay on land here in the Old Dominion forever. But the time now drew fatefully near for him to leave. The *Nancy Lee* had sailed away and returned for another load, and Stephen was to depart upon her next trip.

This trip was delayed. She stood waiting at the mouth of the James while sixty oxen floundered in the mud miles away with a load that did not float downstream on time.

The delay in receiving this consignment cost the *Nancy Lee* twenty-four hours more at Norfolk, for even when once loaded she stood still upon a harbor unrippled by a puff of wind to shake her sails.

For no sooner had the last log been hoisted abroad than the brisk breeze on which the crew had counted to carry them well out upon the bay died away, and Reuben James, second mate aboard the *Nancy,* was disgusted.

Reuben was a crusty Scotchman, too sour-mouthed to join the sailors' cheery whistling for wind, and he stamped and spluttered now, making rope ends sting for any luckless seaman who crossed his unreasonable temper. Finally, in fury, he went ashore with intent to get consolingly and thoroughly drunk. Upon the wharf he ran afoul of Mr. Wheeler, who had himself come personally to help Stephen hasten the hoisting of dripping logs from the water.

When Stephen tried to placate Reuben's rage, the quarrelsome mate snarled back, shaking a hairy fist under Stephen's nose with savage insolence in Mr. Wheeler's hearing:

"Them logs would ha' been here in full time if you young moon fool had minded what you was sent here to do, 'stead of dilly-dallyin' and shilly-shallyin' with your damned droolin' love affairs! You and your lady loves," he leered, "too busy kissin' pretty hands to jump into mud and cold water and hustle logs like you ought!" Cursing a string of sailor's violent and picturesque oaths, the infuriated Reuben departed with a lurch of his bowed sea legs, leaving Mr. Wheeler seething behind him.

"That cannot pass unchallenged, Mr. Decatur," said he in a cold quiet fury.

Stephen, who had felt a sudden flash of healthy hot anger at Reuben's insolence, was surprised nevertheless at the older man's passion, for his own soon cooled.

"Oh, Reuben is a hot-headed oaf, always cursing somebody," said he peaceably.

"He offered an insinuation against my daughter and certainly an open insult to you!" Mr. Wheeler declared with temper. "And if you are not man enough to do it, I shall demand satisfaction of him myself at pistols' points!" Stephen was amazed, but his efforts to smooth things down only ruffled Susan's father more, until Stephen himself lost patience.

"You are insulting me too, Mr. Wheeler," he

said quietly, "when you imply that I am not man enough to challenge him. But he is only a rough sailor and what does he know of a gentleman's duel? I should kill him at once unless he chose his weapons and then he could surely kill me with a sailor's knife, handspike or belaying pin. The man doesn't know any better than to curse roundly at any one. He is red-headed, but he is a good sailor. It is nothing to me that he swears at me."

"It may be nothing to you, but it is something to me," said Mr. Wheeler furiously, "and if you are afraid he will kill you I shall challenge him and shoot him myself."

"You will have me duelling with you next if you go on," Stephen warned with a smile at the other's hasty Southern temper.

Hull, Bainbridge and Dacres now appearing, Stephen appealed to them for opinion and these three men-of-war promptly decided in favor of an immediate duel as the only thing possible for a gentleman under the circumstances. "I'll be your second," Bainbridge offered, at which there was a laugh from the merry Dacres, who said, "Then he would surely have bad luck. Let Hull here support him or your unlucky star will bring him down with a bullet through his heart!" "Bad Luck" Bainbridge good-

naturedly conceded to this superstition, and Hull took the place. He was dispatched forthwith to challenge the choleric Mr. James, although Stephen secretly thought it was all much ado about nothing. No name outshines Stephen Decatur's for valiant fighting with his country's foes, but he ever felt that picking quarrels over personal grudges was nothing short of silly. Hull returned accompanied by Barron who had joined in the excitement and both reported that Reuben James, fairly taken aback by this formal proposal, seemed decidedly reluctant to engage with pistols in spite of his quick and spiteful acceptance.

As Hull went off to secure a surgeon and make arrangements for the duel, Stephen beckoned Barron confidentially to one side. "You go and tell Reuben that I have to see this through," he instructed privately. "Tell him, of course, I have to shoot him, but I'll only shoot him through the leg." Barron, in conscientiously carrying this message, was weirdly forerunning a later challenge, a similar assurance and a tragic duel, all undreamed of then.

Preparations were hurried along that the duel might be finished before a good breeze filled the becalmed ship's sails. The duelling ground lay on the outskirts of Norfolk,

A Paramount Picture. *"Old Ironsides."*

DECATUR SCANS THE SEA IN SEARCH OF THE TRIPOLITAN FLEET.

whither Reuben and the sailor he had chosen as second set out on hired horses. Reuben's second proved to be a Job's comforter, with, moreover, a grewsome sense of humor. It tickled his humor to see Reuben's awkward seat upon the bone-shaking nag he bestrode and he kept calling out, with coarse guffaws, to the ill-natured duellist, "Keep abaft the pommel, man; ease off there or over the taffrail you go. High seas, mate! Lash yourself to the mast! Oh, Reuben, never fear, your bones won't ache on the way back. Sure, you'll be ready to be sewed up in sail cloth and slipped to the sharks then, but keep on the spar deck now, man," as every thump of the horse's stiff-jointed trot threatened to dislodge the uncomfortable seaman.

On reaching the duelling ground, it did not reassure Reuben greatly to eye the ship's surgeon, nor the long pistols, nor to see the seconds pacing off the distance. "Reuben, man, an' ye could swing a belayin' pin now instead of poppin' these Long Toms, ye might bring the brat to terms," suggested Reuben's cheerful partner. But belaying pins, handspikes and lash were not the weapons prescribed to-day and it was evident to all that in spite of his bullying bluster, Reuben was thoroughly frightened.

This rough sea-dog had been in many a tough fist-to-fist scrimmage where he gloried in the outlet for his hot temper in the satisfying pound and crush of mad bodily contact and eye-gouging thumb, but now the precision and cold calculation of an impersonal duel plainly unnerved him. Nevertheless he stood up, gun in hand, like a bold man awaiting the dropped handkerchief with scarcely a flicker of his glowering eyes. The signal was given, both pistols resounded and Reuben fell. His second and the surgeon hastily examined him, and Stephen, unscratched, turned to his victim's side.

"Are you all right?" he asked anxiously, bending over the fallen sailor, adding under his breath, "I only shot you through the leg for the sake of appearances, you know. It is a silly business."

The wounded Reuben only spat a vicious oath in reply, scowling hostilely. Gazing down into those fierce eyes, Stephen could not guess that by his mercy and marksmanship he had made here the staunchest friend and most devoted follower ever a man could have.

CHAPTER X

THE "CONSTITUTION" LEAVES THE WAYS

Stephen had left Philadelphia a boy, with only a boy's dreams and ambitions.

He returned from Susan and Norfolk a man of purpose. Susan he had left with a shy, sweet understanding, sure of his own heart, though not of hers, and anxious now for appointment and promotion that might justify his return to her some day with something worthy to offer. His interest, stimulated by Bainbridge and Hull, made him more impatient than ever to go to sea in spite of the growls of Reuben (whom he nursed faithfully all the way home), who dismally denounced a sailor's lot as a dog's life.

Stephen's hopes that he might see Susan in Philadelphia when she returned to school were dashed by the strict chaperonage that sternly forbid any young men callers or any meetings outside school.

The only consolation that Stephen found in this was that at least it restrained all other young men too!

He had to be content with only one letter from Susan. Girl students were required to write home to parents once a week,—under strict supervision of a school mistress who read each letter to censor it for spelling, subject matter and the proper shade of affection and respect expressed, directing the copying and recopying in precise fine handwriting after all corrections were made and approved. But each girl was allowed to write only one letter each term to some friend outside her family, and if the friend chosen chanced to be of the dreadful sex, signed permission from parents or guardians must be secured before such a letter might be so much as drafted for censorship. Likewise one answer each semester might be received (with parental permission), after the Head Mistress had opened such mail and given it keen scrutiny. James Barron had received Susan's last term's letter, and Stephen was favored with this one, and Susan was counted quite a belle among her school companions that both her letters went to admirers! To tell the truth, when Stephen had slit the wax seal and unfolded the creased letter page he could not recognize Susan's merry chatter and informality in the prim phrasing of this letter which inquired stiffly as to his health and activities in

the manner deemed decorous by a spinster school marm.

There was but one vital paragraph in it to warm his heart and that one told him in stilted wording that "inasmuch as the Wheeler pine and cedar oak trees have gone into the making of our country's greatest frigate, Virginia's most respected Senator had seen fit to visit upon her, Susan, the inestimable honor of christening the *Constitution,* and her revered Father trusted that Stephen's health and duties might permit his presence also at the christening and launching of a warship toward the building of which he had made such praiseworthy endeavors."

Couching the answer to this letter in discreet terms exhausted poor Stephen far more than a hard day's work, but the letter was at length duly signed and sealed and he carried it himself to the school door. From then on Stephen lived in anticipation of the christening.

The *Constitution* was christened and launched on a keen red and gold day toward the end of October. Her sister ships, the *United States* and the *Constellation* had slipped off their ways in July and September, but the *Constitution* was bigger than either and her lumber had been delayed. She towered above the pigmy men

who crawled about her with final rat-a-tat-tats of their hammers, ready for launching, and the sight of her giant masts, tapering skyward, made Stephen think of Susan more than ever.

For Stephen had gone to Boston for the christening in spite of his fears that Gurney & Smith might change their minds about sending him under Charlie Stewart aboard the *Betsy Ross* with the *Constitution's* rigging from the Camden ropewalks.

The arrival of her cordage thus at the last minute enraged the grisled salt in charge of rigging and he upbraided Stephen for tardiness as roughly as ever Reuben James had done, until Reuben himself, now in the *Betsy's* crew, took up cudgels in Stephen's stout defense. Ever since the *Nancy Lee* episode Reuben had done nothing but abuse Stephen vociferously and fly at the throat of any one else who tried to do likewise,—a practice he kept up faithfully as long as there was breath enough left in his body to curse.

Stewart and Stephen found time to go all over the shipyard and new ship. Stephen marveled even then at the solid workmanship whereby the massive spars, set into the keelson far below decks, were reënforced so that in spite of the strain she must endure,—"twist-

ing, rolling, pitching, always under the mighty leverage of the masts at various angles,"—the *Constitution's* spars never fell, her decks never cracked—even through many battles.

The sail loft proved a fascination to Stephen, with its broad clean floor littered with canvas where the sailmakers on their low benches bent stitching away at heavy seams, shoving their great needles through the tough fabric with thick leather "palms" instead of thimbles. Stephen eyed with the interest of novelty the rows of neat tools—"stickers," "fids," "heavers" and "grummet stamps." The loft walls hung heavy with a curious array of bright rings, clew irons, and cringles waiting to be sewed into sail corners for rigging. Stacked ready for the high masts and wide yards of the waiting ship were tight heavy rolls of finished sails that later were to rise aloft, seeming so light and airy as they swept the racing sea winds.

And so lingering here or there, the time finally passed for Stephen. High tide rose about the ship ways and the great moment of the christening arrived. The shipyard was filled with a brilliant gathering of notables, among them in President Adams' party, George Washington himself, who had here the satis-

faction of seeing a step taken in the way of his advice that "if the United States wants commerce she must have a navy." Commodore Barry, too, was present, but Stephen and Stewart had no opportunity to speak to him, for they were not favored with special seats near enough the christening party to hear any of the speeches distinctly. Stephen, therefore, had to content himself with peering through the crowd as best he could when Susan swung the ribboned bottle that cracked and spilled good luck upon its bows. He could only half hear, half fancy he heard, the soft tones of her, "I christen thee *Constitution.*" Then the ship's carpenters, stationed along the keel, let drive their sledges, knocking loose the props and stays that held the great ship on dry land, darting out of the way as with a creaking she began to come alive and slip away. With perfect poise of graceful hull and naked spars the famous warship slid suddenly down the greased ways like an eager living thing rushing down of her own will to her own element.

So in the frosty sunshine of October 21st, 1797, the finest American frigate ever afloat majestically took the water.

The *Constitution's* sea-life had begun.

PART II

HER "SCHOOLBOY" CAPTAINS

David . . . thou art but a youth.
—I SAMUEL.

CHAPTER XI

MIDSHIPMEN

Although the frigates were now launched, —four years after the pirate atrocity that caused their keels to be laid,—they were not yet rigged, their sails were unfinished and their crews not picked.

The frosty scarlet of October faded to the drear gray of November which in turn gave way to a white Christmas and still no word came from Commodore Barry. Stephen spent a winter of discontented uncertainty in despair of ever receiving appointment to the navy.

Charlie Stewart kept up his own spirits and tried to encourage Richard Somers and both Decaturs who by spring had given up hope.

In March Stewart received the lieutenancy he expected and was assigned to their familiar home frigate,—the *United States*.

It was in April, a year from Stephen's memorable trip South, that the others' appointments finally came through. The Decaturs and Richard Somers were fairly wild with excitement at

being assigned as midshipmen to the *United States* with Charlie Stewart, and they lost no time in turning their backs upon Gurney & Smith's ledgers forever. It did not brighten Stephen's prospects greatly to find that James Barron also had been transferred to the new *United States.*

In those rough old days, before Annapolis offered midshipmen training, boys were assigned directly to battleships to learn warfare and seamanship at first hand in a rude apprenticeship by rule of thumb. This catch-as-catch-can method brought out many a national hero who, in the crude survival of the fittest, endured hardships undreamed of in the navy life to-day. The names Decatur, Stewart and Somers, like those of Bainbridge and Hull, were to triumph in this apprenticeship and to live forever in the memory of a grateful country.

The formalities of appointment were soon over, and the three new midshipmen, standing solemnly in coat tails and cocked hats, right hands raised, were soon sworn in to "defend the United States against all their enemies, foreign and domestic." Their careers had really begun. Henceforth they were "Mr." Decatur and "Mr." Somers.

These three landsmen had much to learn

about a ship, and James Barron never for a moment let them forget it. Nor, for the matter of that, did Reuben, who had shipped for the express purpose of ridiculing Stephen's ignorance and preventing anybody else doing so. Reuben's comments on landlubbers were constant and caustic, but all the same "Mr." Decatur learned more practical seamanship from Reuben James than from any one else except Stewart.

Reuben made clear the intricate confusion of tackle, explaining standing and running rigging, as well as the handling of courses, tops'ls and royals and use of both stay and studding sails.

He took a sour delight in "showing off" his agility in running up ratline ladders in the shrouds, swinging loose hand-over-hand high above the waves, in lying out on tossing yard to furl or reef in high winds. At Stephen's approval he only grunted that this was child's play, but that it took a man with hair on his chest to stay aloft an hour at a time in storms off Cape Horn with the gear icebound and sails frozen stiff as sheet iron. Many a salty yarn he spun of "wind-jammers" on which he had labored bare handed in the sleety wind-tossed tops, reefing until cold iron rings, freezing fast

at the touch of his wet hands tore off the flesh, while storm-rent canvas tore at the fastenings in gales that flung the ship topsy-turvy in long ugly rollers.

Stephen was particularly conscientious in learning and to Reuben's sarcastic disgust, Mr. Decatur methodically entered the names of ropes and sails in an orderly little clerk's notebook in which he compiled a glossary of ship's language. He always carried this notebook in his pocket and did not hesitate,—when puzzled by strange terms and new orders,—to pull it out, flip over the pages, con them diligently and make new entries at any spare minute. It was not the custom in those days before Annapolis to use any sort of text book and the scholarly Decatur got himself called "queer" for his pains. This seemed the height of academic folly to the old salts aboard who passed about among themselves much profane mockery of a young fool who wasted time listing in a little book such every-day words as dolphin-striker; flying martingale; bolt-ropes; clew-garnets; mizzen-truck, futtock shrouds; monkey-gaff vangs, or lower spanker boom topping-lift. Indeed there is no calling in which the old-timers will not ridicule a greenhorn and block jealously his efforts to learn as much as they.

However, on the day that a contemptuous Jackie reduced his companions to guffaws of derision at Stephen, Reuben put an end to such ridicule once and for all. The sailor remarked secretly and slurringly that if Mr. Decatur went aloft to reef tops'ls he would be on the footlines at the yard till the wind died down trying to find out from his book what a cringle was. His caricaturing impersonation of Stephen was really good, but Reuben knocked him down.

So it was that one of the navy's greatest commanders had fun poked at him as a fool and ignoramus when first he went to sea. Decatur put his mind to work upon perfecting himself in seamanship, however, from the very day he went aboard, for he had a double incentive for promotion—Susan and his own ambition.

To begin with, everything was new and strange to all three green midshipmen. They were each of them more or less familiar, to be sure, with trading vessels, but a warship was far different.

A frigate, such as the one they were on, was the cruiser of the period, distinctive in having but one gun deck below her spar deck, while a "ship-of-the-line" (that is, of the line-of-battle),—which was the battleship of the day,

gloried in two or more gun decks below her spar (or upper) deck. These gun decks were painted a gory red inside to hide bloodstains during battle. It was customary for these decks to be marked by broad white bands running outside along the ship's hull along the ports, and to rate ships by the number of guns they carried. Thus a ship-of-the-line might carry between 74 and 120 guns while frigates were usually rated "28's" to "44's."

Both the *Constitution* and the *United States* were "44's" but there was not a single ship-of-the-line then in the United States navy.

The cannon that were counted for rating these ships were simply cast iron cylinders set on wooden carriages with wheels. A heavy hawser, run through a ring on the breech, checked the recoil when the firing kicked the gun backward on its wheels. These guns were rolled back to ram the load down the muzzles, the shot being either cannister (a small cylinder or "can" full of small lead shot) or solid balls weighing between 18 and 24 pounds which carried a mile.

These were packed down against a woolen bag containing about 6 lbs. of gunpowder. To fire this the gunner ran a wire down the vent

in the breech, puncturing a hole in the bag, then thrust into the powder, thus exposed, a quill-ful of powder touched off by a slow match.

But while the cannon balls might carry a mile, there was no precision possible in sighting these crude cannon and for effective warfare it was necessary to engage at close range.

The guns were clumsy things at best, with no sights, rudely aimed by being swung this way or that on their carriages by side tackles, their muzzles tilted up or down and held by guesswork in position, jacking up breech or muzzle with a wooden wedge called a "quoin." Even if the aim thus achieved was fairly accurate, the shot did not fit the gun bore and when fired "the gunner could not tell how much the ball would wobble in the bore before it left the muzzle." It is therefore clear enough why the big guns (affectionately referred to as "Long Toms") throwing twenty-four pounders, were uncertain of aim, and were supplemented by the wide-mouthed, chunky "carronades" which, used upon the spar deck, had no long range but were murderous at close quarters.

To grapple at close quarters was common tactics, and for defense in this, nettings were always ready along the bulwarks to be triced up

to hold back boarders. Into these nettings the sailors' sleeping-hammocks were rolled up and stowed out of the way every morning, leaving the lower berth decks (where sailors slept on a man-of-war instead of in the usual forecastle), free.

The crew aboard a frigate was divided into the two usual classes—the sailors and the marines. This arrangement had grown up from the English custom of earlier days when decks were crowded with soldiers to do the fighting while there were only sailors enough to work the ship. But American sailors, even on trading vessels, had of necessity learned gunnery in self-defense and now aboard the warships every sailor was ready and able to carry on active fighting with the marines—the "soldiers of the sea." The traditional rivalry between sailor and marine had already sprung up as an outgrowth of the British custom to foster ill-feeling between the two to forestall their joining in mutiny on English ships where a sailor's life was notoriously one of brutal slavery.

Needless to say Reuben James took glum pleasure in being at loggerheads with every marine he ran into. Stephen, with his natural knack at winning approval, soon lived down his early ridicule and was fast becoming popular among seamen, marines and officers alike.

In fact he applied himself with such good will that before long he felt he was well on the way to becoming a worthy son of Captain Stephen Decatur, Senior, of the privateer *Fair American.* Stephen, Junior, now itched for real action.

It seemed as if he were likely to get it,—and sooner than any one expected, for when in port one day Charlie Stewart returned to the ship with a copy of the "Gazette" that set the officers buzzing about him.

Stephen and the other midshipmen, impatient to hear the sensation, at last had word passed to them that Congress had been informed that the President's envoys to France had been met with the astounding statement that they would not be received unless the United States forwarded an immediate loan to the new French Republic together with an amount of graft for the French Directorate to insure American envoys being received at all!

"That, coming on top of everything else, means war!" some one cried and somebody else called out, "Hear this!" and at what he had to say a spontaneous cheer broke loose.

"Good old Charles Pinckney of South Carolina gave the Frenchmen this answer—

" 'The United States has MILLIONS FOR DEFENCE, BUT NOT ONE CENT FOR TRIBUTE!' "

CHAPTER XII

A TRIBUTE OF MONEY

The frigate *United States,* to the huge excitement of all her crew, was ordered forthwith to the West Indies where a swarm of French privateers was busily preying upon American ships. There was no declaration of war but orders were given for American warships to protect trading vessels with cannon balls.

The *Constellation,* sister ship to the *United States* and the famous *Constitution,* was the first of these famous frigates to try her wings. Her prompt triumph over the French *Insurgente* and *Vengeance* proved a good omen for the newborn navy begun in these premier frigates.

Though Stewart, Decatur, Somers and Barron deplored their luck that they and the *United States* were not in the thick of it, they applauded the *Constellation's* victory for winning their warships a much-needed popularity in the face of the country's stern opposition to the navy as "a tool of tyranny." In spite of popular disapproval of a navy, on April 30th that

year, 1798, the Navy Department was organized, the first Secretary of the Navy appointed and our pioneer midshipmen began to rejoice in hope of active patriotic sea-service.

More ships were hurriedly launched and every promising young seaman who had done duty on merchantmen or privateers began to crowd into the crews of the new battleships. Stephen learned through Barron of Bainbridge's and Hull's appointments to warships and rejoiced in a sense of fellowship with them though he had not met them again since his Norfolk days.

The war went on briskly with no formal declaration, but with many a sharp encounter in which our young officers received training in war and seamanship that stood them in good stead later on.

Lieut. Isaac Hull, Stephen's Norfolk friend and duelling second, won fame and promotion (to Stephen's intense pride and envy) in a brilliant sally which he made into the harbor of Santo Domingo,—a favorite haunt of French privateers.

He landed in broad daylight, dashed on the fort and spiked her guns, then under their very muzzles captured a notorious privateer lying at anchor under the shadow of the vanquished

fort. When news of this daring conquest spread through the other warships, Stephen could hardly have been more delighted had he turned the trick himself and he simply exhausted his brother and Somers with his continued "I used to know Isaac Hull when—"

So for two years and a half the French and American vessels met in bitter, if unofficial, skirmishes, and then Napoleon, realizing that he had a long-drawn-out war with England on his hands, and not wishing to fight America at the same time, opened the way to peace.

"Here's the end of war," announced Stephen, coming aboard one day from shore leave at Norfolk when the *United States* was taking on supplies, and when Stephen, for some reason, managed to spend most of his time on land. For that matter, Stephen was not the only midshipman to take to dry land in Norfolk when the U. S. flotilla was often stationed near, and where, war or no war, the naval dances were gay events and young officers learned that there was more than one pretty girl in Norfolk society.

"What is the end of war?" demanded Richard Somers.

"Why, see here," said Stephen, spreading out a copy of the "Gazette." "The quarter-

deck may have its special orders and know all about the peace treaty, but all I know I get from this sheet."

He spread out the quaint little newspaper, found the place, disregarding such advertisements tucked into the text as:

> Six or seven months ago, was lent by S. Barron, a barbecuing Iron which he desires may be returned, he having forgot to whom he lent it.
>
> Between the second and third Sundays in June past there was stolen three Bibles out of St. Paul's church. If the culprits will look therein, read Mark, learn and inwardly digest the 8th Commandment, returning said Bibles, no questions will be asked.
>
> To be sold: a young breeding negro woman fit for town or country business, has had small pox; also a mill for grinding malt and some very good live goose feathers. Inquire of S. Wheeler and know the price. They will be sold very reasonable for ready money.

Stephen had a passing hope that Susan's pet twins had never figured in the "for sale" column, and went on to more serious items.

over which he and Richard bent. They had been at sea, shut into a little world of their own aboard ship, so long that they were out of touch with the nation's affairs and now hungrily devoured news already stale to those on land where a newspaper was a common once-a-week affair.

"Peace with France!" stormed Stephen. "This is a disgrace to our country! When France demanded $240,000 bribe money as the price of receiving our envoys and threatened to send warships to our coast if we did not extend an immediate national loan besides, Pinckney told them '*not one cent for tribute,*' and President Adams then declared he would never send another envoy to France unless assured that they would receive him properly. Yet here, at the first word from Napoleon, he goes ahead and sends other envoys to sign up a treaty of peace."

"Well," said Somers mildly, "peace is a good thing."

"Not peace without victory!" Stephen flamed.

But Somers sympathized with Adams.

"He has always been for peace at any price," he said. "He is the Peace President and critics have torn him to shreds. This is pathetic—

read that where he says he hopes when he dies his epitaph may be, *'Here lies the man who took upon himself responsibility for peace with France.'* He thinks that his action will seem wise to future generations. I wonder if it will? All they can say of him will be that he kept us out of war!"

"Here is an end to all our new warships," Stephen stewed. "With Thomas Jefferson elected you may be sure he'll scrap the ships and we, Dick, shall never have a chance to be in action. Even the Barbary Pirates are keeping quiet," and Stephen sank into a frowning meditation on the lucklessness of being born after all his country's wars were over!

"Yes, what will become of the warships?" Somers said, for neither boy imagined that the frigates were only at the dawn of their careers.

There were now afloat ten more battleships than the Original Three, and each of these had personalities as distinct as the men who became their commanders.

There was the *Essex* which Stephen had mentioned as being built of lumber contributed by Essex County, N. J., and *its* history is a book in itself!

Not to be outdone by Jersey, the *New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia* and *Chesapeake* were

launched with names that told the patriotic story of local contributions that made their building possible and prompt.

Stephen's father was the first captain of the *Philadelphia* which was soon to fall among Barbary pirates under Bad Luck Bainbridge's star of ill-fate and to precipitate, at last, action long delayed.

The *Chesapeake,* unlucky from beginning to end, had her misfortunes interwoven with the unhappy crossing of Stephen's and Barron's fortunes.

The Government had hurried through four more frigates named for the Presidents:

George Washington, John Adams, Adams, and *The President.*

The President Decatur was to command and lose.

The *George Washington* also fell under Bainbridge's fateful command.

There were, besides these, the "Lucky Little *Enterprise,*" an armed schooner rigged as a brig which darted in and out among the fortunes and misfortunes of our young midshipmen.

These thirteen vessels,—an ominous number —comprised the U. S. Navy on that day in May

in the year 1800 when tribute money was sent to the insolent Bey of Algiers.

It fell to the lot that year of Stephen's friend William Bainbridge, now Captain of the *George Washington,* to bear the shameful yearly ransom to the Barbary powers. Bainbridge set sail gloomily muttering that he would far rather be sent to blow the port of Algiers to pieces, and every man in the navy agreed with him.

Charlie Stewart who had joined the navy in the hope of punishing pirates at whose hands he and his fellows had suffered sadly, boiled with fury at Bainbridge's departure.

"Here we have thirteen ships on hand!" he fumed, "and no other war to bother with, yet we growl fiercely, '*Not one cent for tribute,*' and meekly hand over gold in ransom to show that our bark is worse than our bite!"

Somers and the Decaturs, with whom the *Dauphin's* cruel loss still rankled, raged at being held in restraint indefinitely against the Pirates who had struck so near home to them at Gurney & Smith's. They had enlisted not to fight the French but the Turks, and all they got for their enlistment was the satisfaction of wearing immaculate uniforms at Norfolk naval dances. This was not what they wanted of navy life and Stephen for one rebelled against

this inaction in carrying out their purpose until he was now as discontented in the navy as he had ever been as a ledger clerk. Added to this, Susan seemed equally interested in a hundred and one other uniforms, and altogether Jamie and Somers found Stephen no pleasant companion these days!

Meanwhile Bainbridge was entering the treacherous harbor of Algiers and, as ever, his star of ill luck went with him.

He anchored reluctantly and dispatched his hateful errand. But no sooner was he prepared to sail for home than the Bey sent a high-handed command to him to put about and carry a shipload of slaves and an ambassador to the Sultan in Constantinople. To this Bainbridge sent the disdainful message:

"The United States warship *George Washington* is not a ferry boat for your convenience and cannot be used as such."

The Bey sent back word contemptuously, "A fig for your warships! Since you pay me tribute you make yourselves my slaves. I have therefore the right to order you as I see fit."

In vain Bad Luck Bainbridge haughtily protested. What could he do, lying under the heavy guns of the Bey's fortress, and surrounded by pirate craft?

To disobey meant capture and slavery. So the *George Washington* went to Constantinople, but the United States government received this word from her captain:

"I hope I may never again be sent to Algiers with tribute unless I am authorized to deliver it from the cannon's mouth."

CHAPTER XIII

A TRIBUTE OF POWDER

At last America's long-simmering wrath boiled over. A menacing squadron was dispatched straightway to the Mediterranean.

It set out from Hampton Roads, and Stewart, Somers and the Decaturs, downhearted, were left behind in Norfolk where they had to watch others sail away to accomplish the very thing they had enlisted to do themselves.

To make it all the harder for Stephen and James, their father, first captain of the ill-fated *Philadelphia,* went without them in this squadron,—a squadron that consisted of ships already met,—the great frigates *Philadelphia, President* and *Essex* and the lucky little schooner *Enterprise* under the enterprising Lt. Sterrett. The Commodore in command aboard the flagship *President* was Richard Dale, always a hero in Stephen's eyes, and famous as John Paul Jones' lieutenant in the great fight between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the British *Serapis.*

As these ships were slowly taking their way

across the Atlantic under strict orders even then *not to make war but to keep the peace,* the Bashaw of Tripoli with an angry blow of an ax put an end to peace.

The city of Tripoli lay white in the sun that glimmered on her plaster roofs and walls. Before her lay the blue water of the harbor, frowned on by the heavy battery of her threatening fort.

Within the narrow crooked streets of the city the daily bartering went on. Camels and donkeys lurched laden through the narrow ways. Merchants bickered over bales of dates and drugs, a shifting medley of Turk, Moor, Arab, Christian slaves and sea robbers thronged the dusty streets. Among the flowing burnouses of Arabs bobbed the crimson fez of Turks and the black skull caps of grave Jews in dark gaberdines. It was a jostling, motley Oriental crowd, but peaceful and intent on trade. Over it all, floating high upon its flagpole at the American consulate, waved the Stars and Stripes. But at the palace of the Bashaw, trouble was brewing.

The old Bashaw in a wicked temper stormed up and down his council chamber foaming with jealousy that the American ship *George Washington* had brought less gold to him than to

the Bey of Algiers. Nothing could torment the grasping old Mohammedan more than to see a shrewder man drive a sharper bargain than he.

So he and the Bey of Tunis put their beards together and made up their greedy minds to toss treaties to the winds and make a bold play for more blackmail. They sent imperious word to their American consuls, "Tell your United States to send us twenty-five thousand dollars apiece with no argument and at once, or they may pay it to ransom their consuls from Barbary dungeons."

And forthwith a swarm of corsairs were let loose to hound American trading vessels.

The consuls naturally demurred. Then in a rage the Bashaw of Tripoli, with a mandatory clap of his hands shrieked vindictive orders and a eunuch with hasty salaams flew to obey.

Swinging a vengeful ax he hacked down the flagpole of the American consulate and the proud Stars and Stripes came shamefully careening to the ground.

The consul, Mr. Tobias Lear, coming out to protest, was snatched by Mohammedan guards, dragged through the streets and flung at the feet of the Barbarian potentate. The Bashaw now doubled his fury and demanded twenty-five

A Paramount Picture.

"THERE'S YOUR TARGET—TWO POINTS TO STARBOARD," DECATUR TELLS HIS TRUSTY CHIEF GUNNER. *"Old Ironsides."*

thousand dollars in gold at once as the price of the consul's own life and safety and the honor of his wife and daughters.

Lear was trapped. He hurried back, and not daring to venture an escape raised the sum by dickering with Jewish money lenders for everything he owned.

William Eaton, the consul at Tunis, was made of different stuff and moreover he was not handicapped by wife or daughter.

Upon being similarly manhandled and presented at the palace, he returned to his consulate pretending to raise the money immediately. As his guards departed, Eaton spit at their retreating backs with true Oriental fervor and expressiveness, and, disguised as a Moslem, he left Tunis that night furtively upon a smelly little vessel loaded with honey, wax and cork, bound for Egypt.

This William Eaton was a bold and fiery veteran of the American Revolution, and the fierce gleam smoldering in the eyes that glittered above his false beard as he stood muffled at the rail watching the lights of Tunis slip further and further to the stern, proclaimed that the Bey had by no means heard the last of him!

In the meantime, on came Lt. Dale and his

squadron, knowing nothing of the war declared by the passionate Bashaw. One by one the ships entered Gibraltar, the little *Enterprise* ahead. Out upon her darted the Tripolitan sea wolves, and the guns of the black pirate ketch *Tripoli* barked at her. Now the squadron's orders were to avoid battle and take no prizes, but the spirited Sterrett's guns "sassed back," and the spunky little *Enterprise* bore down fiercely upon the pirate ship and forced her to strike. Three times she struck her colors and three times, when left, she ran them up again and impudently re-opened fire. It was then that Sterrett administered the spanking she deserved. He gave her broadside after broadside, raking her decks fore and aft and bringing down all but the stump of one spar. After a three-hour struggle he put alongside her and his men leaped aboard.

They found that of the eighty pirates twenty lay dead and thirty more huddled wounded and helpless. Not an American was scratched!

Sterrett could not take the corsair as a prize, but very thoroughly and methodically he had her stripped of cannon, pistols, dirks, cutlasses and scimitars and threw them overboard. Then he dismantled her and leaving only a rag of a sail to waft her into harbor sent them, the

first pirates to taste American lead, back to shore with this message:

"Go tell your Bashaw and the people of your country that hereafter they may expect only a tribute of powder and ball from the sailors of the United States."

CHAPTER XIV

"PEPPERY" PREBLE'S "SCHOOLBOYS"

THE triumph of the *Enterprise* was the one and only bright spot in the squadron's whole year of lax blockade, then home sailed the ships again, for their men were only on one year enlistments and in that time had accomplished just exactly nothing at all.

Off went another squadron, this time with two year enlistments and again Stewart, Decatur and Somers were left fuming behind.

Five years had rolled round since the *Dauphin's* loss had fired them to enlist and still they were held back, in despair of ever accomplishing their purpose. The five years had brought changes to them all.

They were no longer boys and no longer midshipmen. Charlie Stewart and Bill Bainbridge were married. Promotions had made Stewart a captain and the other lieutenants, while Captain Decatur, Stephen's father, a Commodore now, commanded a squadron in the West Indies. His flagship was not the *Philadelphia* in which he had sailed to Tripoli and the *Phila-*

delphia, with the shadow of fate falling dark upon her, now was commanded by Captain Bainbridge of bad-luck fame.

Before the two year enlistments expired, "Do-Nothing" Morris, the Commodore at Tripoli, was recalled, court martialed for inaction and dismissed.

And now war clouds hung heavy over the Mediterranean. The Bey of Tripoli was more insolent than ever, finding that no matter what outrage his corsairs dared, the United States did nothing!

The United States *"did something"* finally! Commodore Preble, old "Peppery" Preble, veteran of Revolutionary sea fights, set sail for Tripoli with the most dare-devil squadron that ever the high seas held. His flagship was the *Constitution,*—known in later years as *Old Ironsides,*—the finest frigate in the world. Behind her followed Captain Bainbridge on the *Philadelphia* but there were no other frigates in the fleet. The lesson of the *Enterprise* had taught Dale and Do-Nothing Morris that frigates were too heavy to navigate with safety the dangerous shoals that made Tripoli's harbor treacherous. Too ponderous to give chase to light-draught corsairs, the frigates had to stand idle outside the harbor while a little

schooner like the *Enterprise* might safely skip in and out among the reefs and shallows of the rocky harbor where pirate vessels lurked. These pirates, like hidden spiders ready to dart out upon their prey, could swiftly retreat behind rocky points and unchartered shoals that meant certain shipwreck to imprudent strangers. "Peppery" Preble therefore saw to it shrewdly that he was not lumbered down with too many massive frigates. He took along four brand new fast little brigs, *The Vixen, The Argus, The Nautilus* and *The Siren,* and among his officers were at least four young men to whom long delay had but whetted a keener edge to their desire for pirate blood. Lt. Richard Somers commanded the tidy little *Nautilus,* Captain Charles Stewart the larger *Siren,* while Lt. Stephen Decatur rejoiced in command of the spunky *Enterprise,* herself. These dogs of war strained eagerly at the leash to be let loose upon the tyrannical Tripolitans. Down to the Mediterranean sailed this historic squadron, *Old Ironsides* spreading her new clean sails high and white above her accompanying brigs like a swan amid a fleet of little ducklings.

The task before her was terrific. For two hundred years and more the cruel corsairs called these waters their own, and now the up-

start navy of a new weak country beyond the West horizon's brim, risked facing these Turk pirates in their own home haunts.

Old Preble spluttered and grumbled at the force of men allotted him for the venture. He was a Yankee captain of cayenne hair and temper, and bad health did not make this bad temper better. Upon his battleships the stern old disciplinarian laid down the law and regulations learned from the greatest navy in the world,—regulations that his officers never forgot and passed on down as traditions to the navy to-day—the fine English ideals of duty and discipline aboard a man-of-war that had made England truly the Mistress of the Seas.

But this old sea dog had weathered the Revolution with seasoned crews of old tars, and he sputtered and stamped and grumbled and complained and swore lustily at the green hands given him as officers now,—for all his captains and lieutenants were still in their twenties. Schooled under "Peppery" these officers won later fame, but now, fresh-faced, smooth-cheeked, young and untried, their inexperience in war provoked old Preble until he grew purple in the face. Besides our Gurney & Smith friends and Bainbridge and Hull, Preble's squadron boasted such men as David Porter of

future *Essex* trickery and daring, and among all these salts, the fresh water heroes Thomas McDonough of Lake Champlain and James Lawrence of "Don't-Give-Up-the-Ship" memory.

None of them but Isaac Hull had yet done anything to win Preble's hope for their future, and surrounded on every side by Barbary Pirates born and bred to sailing and savagery from generations of infidel sea-robbers, "Peppery" snorted at the quiet cultured lads upon his own ships and denounced them scornfully as "Nothing but a lot of schoolboys."

CHAPTER XV

BAD LUCK BAINBRIDGE FALLS AMONG PIRATES

First of "Peppery" Preble's squadron to breeze past Gibraltar sped the eager *Enterprise* which Decatur whipped on with every straining stitch of canvas, ardently bent upon beginning the task he had sworn years before to do.

Old Ironsides paused at Tangiers while her red pepper Commodore went ashore to read the riot act to the Bey of Morocco for permitting his corsairs to sink and rob an American merchant vessel.

Never had the imperious monarch been confronted by a more furious and fearless sea fighter. In words more biting than raw mustard Preble laid down his terms in a rage that really impressed the unscrupulous Moslem so that he actually apologized and returned the captured sailors at once and without ransom. The Bey had met his match and though Preble had yet to face the unconquered tartar of Tripoli, let it be said to the everlasting credit of the Commodore's vinegar temper that when he stamped out of the palace at Tangiers he had

ended trouble with Morocco once and for all. In a single crackling interview Preble had accomplished there what treaties, tributes and warships had failed for centuries to do. It was *Old Ironsides'* first triumph. Built to quiet Barbary pirates, she had already subdued the first that came to hand.

In the meanwhile Preble had sent Capt. Bainbridge on to blockade the port of Tripoli. The *Philadelphia* and the *Vixen* accordingly took their stand at the mouth of the treacherous harbor to bottle up all prowling pirates, while the *Enterprise* and her companions policed the Mediterranean.

The busy harbor, rippling before the *Philadelphia's* prow, presented a weird Oriental picture to Americans familiar chiefly with home harbors at Boston and New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk.

African ships of every sort and hue dotted the blue Mediterranean with the selfsame rakish slant of lateen booms or primitive lug sails—some in colorful stripes—as had been plying there since the days of Pharaoh or the first bold Phœnicians, all little changed since the walls of ancient Carthage fell.

Italian feluccas skimmed along, their sails trimmed by sailors gay in the rainbow stripes of

their long tasseled caps, passing Moorish xebecs with black sailors wearing brilliant bandannas knotted about their heads. Turk slave ships, black warships fluttering the flags of all nations, fishing boats, small skip-jacks, all gave the harbor an aspect of busy animation, while ever and anon swift low-lying pirate craft spread wicked wings seaward like hawks hovering on evil outlook for easy prey.

Bainbridge was under orders to let no Barbary vessel out of the harbor, and the *Philadelphia,* with alert midshipmen on the lookout aloft watched the port entrance. The frigate lay like a cat with sleepless eyes upon a rat-hole.

It was balm to Bainbridge's soul to direct the *Philadelphia's* thirty-eight defiant guns upon barbarians who had contemptuously used his former frigate *George Washington* for a slave ship.

In spite of his vigilance, however, a ship stealthily escaped by night and slipped out of the dark harbor. It was the Tripolitan ketch *Mastico,* loaded with young girl slaves, a royal present for the Sultan from the evil Bashaw. The brisk *Vixen,* under Lt. Isaac Hull, gave prompt chase.

All this time Stephen Decatur had kept the *Enterprise* busily sweeping the sea and by

morning sighted the *Mastico* still flying before the *Vixen's* pursuit. The ketch, built for guilty speed, had piled on all canvas, and was outdistancing the tenacious *Vixen* when suddenly Decatur's *Enterprise,* like a quick falcon swooping down upon a pigeon, cut across her bow and with the threat of her twelve determined guns forced the slave convoy to surrender.

Decatur had struck his first blow at pirate slave trade. He was far out upon the Mediterranean and put in now toward Malta to arrange for the slave girls' freedom. These unfortunate maidens were all scantily clad, frightened, pretty and very young—some mere children scarcely twelve years old—destined for they knew not what harem horrors. One tragic-faced young Greek girl, kidnaped from her father's ship, and terrified now at all the hubbub and strange foreign uniforms of the Americans, was sobbing so quietly and so pitifully that a young Jack Tar, despite the jeers of the disgusted Reuben James, stoutly wiped her tears upon his sleeve.

While the *Enterprise* was returning with her prize, the *Vixen,* back again at her post, was passed by a black corsair that scudded past to enter the harbor's retreat. Such a pirate ship

had taken the *Dauphin* and many another like her. The *Philadelphia* sprang to life as the corsair swept by, and with swelling sails bore down upon her before the wind.

The corsair darted knowingly between the hidden shoals, but African waters were all uncharted then and Bainbridge had no way of knowing where lay hidden reefs. So, while the pirate could dodge swiftly and surely, the *Philadelphia* had to pick her way carefully, feeling cautiously for rocks and shallows.

The harbor shores thrust out to sea on either side like great open jaws jagged with sharp projecting rocks like hungry teeth, ever ready to grind unwary prey sucked in by its restless lapping tongue of water. It seemed as if the very sea itself here shared the malicious Barbary nature.

All along the shore the noses of one hundred and nineteen sinister guns glowered down upon the water from the gray, grim batteries of forts and castle.

On sped the light corsair and down upon her bore the heavy *Philadelphia*. Bainbridge kept a leadsman in the ship's eyes sounding constantly. Suddenly his quick cry, "Shoals!" rang out and Bainbridge boomed his orders to put over the helm. The sail trimmers promptly

braced yards sharply and the ship swung round with her bow out to sea.

In another moment there was a tremendous jar and cracking as the Philadelphia crashed head-on upon a hidden reef. There she stuck, then slowly listed to one side. Out skulked a dozen pirate craft with yapping guns, like cautious wolves closing in upon a wounded stag. The *Philadelphia's* cannon, tilted hopelessly out of range upon her high side and nosing the water's edge upon the other, could not be transferred upon the deck, (that now slanted as sharply as a roof) and trained to answer the Barbary attack. Only the three guns at her stern roared back a desperate defiance.

And now there was a frantic scurrying of the crew toiling madly to work the trapped ship off the reef. Overboard went every ounce of weight that could be spared—anchors and useless cannon cut loose and splashed below, but the reeling ship did not swing back. As last resort even the foremast was cut away and cast off. Still she would not budge. In vain the sails were trimmed; in vain men scurried to obey the boatswain's whistles shrilly piping them to pumps. For four hours the marines held the pirates off with musketry, while sailors struggled with the ship, all fighting for life.

But now water began to seep insidiously ahead of their frenzied pumping, and with guns gone there was nothing to do but hastily dismantle the good warship against certain capture. Bad luck was Bainbridge's that day!

When all that could be done to save the gallant frigate, *was* done, Bainbridge sadly ordered her destruction. "Chips," the carpenter, was sent below to bore holes in the ship's sides, and gunners were dispatched to drench down the gunpowder and heave overboard all shot. Then Lieut. David Porter reluctantly lowered the ensign to the deck and the brave crew awaited the inevitable end, watching the Turkish boats, grown bolder, hasten on.

Like vultures gathering on the carcass of a dead warhorse, the corsairs swarmed gluttonously aboard the crippled *Philadelphia.*

PART III

HER TASK BEGUN

"If we want commerce, we must have a navy."
—GEORGE WASHINGTON.

CHAPTER XVI

BEHIND BARBARY PRISON BARS

"By the beard of the Prophet!" chortled the Tripolitan Bashaw in wicked glee, "these upstart Amerikanoes came boasting of humbling me and Allah hath delivered them into my hands!" He clapped those cruel hands with a glitter of their heavily jeweled rings and summoned salaaming guardsmen. "Bring hither the impudent foreigners, and bring hither also the severed heads of any corsair making way with loot that may please my eye!" At another flourish of his hands and glittering gems, the guardsmen vanished.

The royal robber paced his chamber back and forth stroking his beard and chuckling, well satisfied with the prize his harbor held clenched fast upon her rocks. An American,—and not only a rich and hated American but an American *warship!* The last time a warship from the United States had met Tripolitan men, a luckless corsair lost the scrimmage and came, beaten, back to port with the high-handed message:

"Go tell your Bashaw hereafter he may expect only tribute of powder and ball." The barbaric Bashaw had forthwith ordered the pirate who dared deliver such a message bound and set backwards upon a donkey.

Mounted thus, facing the animal's tail, the victim was lashed through jeering crowds on the streets of Tripoli while on the ass before him rode a tame and ugly ape decked out in caricature with corsair's turban, earrings and scimitar. The man bore a sign in Arabic upon his chest "I surrender to Christians." The ape wore a placard reading "I am a better man than he who rides behind me."

With such vicious ridicule the potentate punished unsuccessful pirates.

But now the tables were turned. American officers should ride humiliated, jeered and spit upon through street crowds to parade the Bashaw's scorn of foreign powers!

While the Bashaw plotted spite, his rabble rifled the stricken frigate. They ransacked lockers, store rooms and galley, split open sailors' sea chests, scattering their contents recklessly about the decks in a wild orgy of thievery, picking the pockets of officers, stealing the very clothes from the seamen they stripped. Two brawny Tripolitans would grip an officer

and run through his pockets, pilfering swords, money, watches, rings, knives and even cutting off coveted cockades and gilt epaulettes. Never had so rich a haul been theirs! Jealous fights broke out among themselves over the loot and pillage, and yet no defense could be made by the Americans who were so outnumbered that resistance meant death with torture.

Finally a robber, overhauling Bainbridge for possible loot overlooked by others, tore loose the Captain's coat and shirt and found next to his heart a delicate ivory miniature of his young and lovely wife. When this was seized, Bainbridge threw caution to the winds and flew at the leering bandit's throat with such violence that the pirate, glutted with other treasure, let him keep his memento. Then, with the rest of the officers and crew, arms bound behind him, still clutching his cherished miniature, Bad Luck Bainbridge, in the worst of bad luck, was hauled off the ship, lashed through the streets and haled before the merciless Bashaw.

It pleased the Bashaw, as it pleases a cat to play with a mouse, to entertain the officers that night in the palace at a sumptuous dinner. The next day they were hurled into a dungeon beneath the fortress guns.

The *Philadelphia's* 300 able-bodied tars were

held for ransom and made to earn their keep by slave labor on city fortifications and the harbor mole.

On Hallowe'en in the year 1803 Bainbridge and Porter heard the clang of massive bars that shut them behind solid walls of living rock for two long sunless years. Here they languished, cut off from the outside world save for a glimpse of the harbor through a high fine grating set in a narrow air hole.

Through this hole the pair peered out to see the fate of the *Philadelphia* and beheld to their surprise the pirates float her loose from the reef at high tide, plug her holes, patch her rigging and anchor her, safely salvaged, under the very guns that loomed above the prison walls. There in plain sight she rode at anchor, as good as new, the largest, proudest vessel ever owned by any Barbary Bashaw!

To see their United States frigate stripped of honor and transformed for pirate duty, sickened the two officers peeping out at her from behind their prison bars. Shut in like rats in a trap, they beat their brows and the very walls in dismal effort to save her honor.

A gleam of hope came unexpectedly.

The Danish consul, Mr. Nissen, artfully worked upon the treacherous Bashaw to see the

prisoners. The Dane was a great towering blonde giant whose ancestors had ploughed the stormy north Atlantic in viking ships generations before these dark Moors and crafty Turks had learned to rig a clumsy sail that could even tack against the wind. No viking feared a Moslem, and the Bashaw, subservient at heart, like any bully, felt it.

Nissen entreated the Most High for permission to see and speak with the foreign captives and though his words were supplicating, his cold eye was like the blue ice of fiords. His request was granted. From time to time throughout the next two years Mr. Nissen did all any man could to make imprisonment endurable.

When he left the dungeon after his first visit, Nissen carried a letter from Bainbridge to "Peppery" Preble. Had the Bashaw seen it he could only have read a captain's report to his Commodore, with a diplomatic postscript to say he was well fed and well treated.

But interlined invisibly was another message, —written in lemon juice.

CHAPTER XVII

A DESPERATE SCHEME

Preble held the letter to a candle and as the lemon juice heated and turned brown there loomed up from between commonplace lines the ghostly tracery of secret diagrams and instructions for destroying the dishonored *Philadelphia.*

It was a desperate plan and might mean ruin to the men who tried it. However, old Preble was of no disposition to sit still biting his nails in annoyance and doing nothing.

Before he acted, however, the choleric old veteran did something so gracious that it would hardly have been expected of a man of his hot temper. He wrote Bainbridge a letter full of comfort and hearty sympathy, expressing generous approval of his service and conduct in the past and assuring him that every effort would be made to rescue him and his companions in the near future. The Commodore exonerated him from all blame in striking an unchartered reef that ran, it was discovered, parallel to the shore for the whole length of the

harbor. There was not a line of condemnation for Bainbridge's fatal and costly disaster.

This letter succeeded in a roundabout way in reaching Bainbridge through the kind efforts of the good Danish consul.

The Commodore was not alone in expressing confidence in the imprisoned Captain, for the *Philadelphia's* officers were scarcely herded into the prison yard, on which their cells opened, before they drew up a testimonial assuring Bainbridge of their belief that he was in every way blameless for the frigate's loss.

These messages, treasured for the rest of the unfortunate Captain's life, together with the little ivory miniature of his wife, were the only things that relieved Bainbridge's years of imprisonment.

When Preble had done what he could to ease the Captain's distress, he set to work at once to wipe out the pirate nest and free American prisoners.

Bainbridge's scheme was to rob the Turks of the dangerous weapon they held in possession of the frigate.

He outlined a plan which in a measure might redeem the ship's loss. His idea was to take her from the pirates by destroying her where she lay.

Preble was pondering this in his cabin on the *Constitution* when Lieutenant Decatur was announced. He had reported for orders on disposing of the slave ship *Mastico.*

The Commodore laid Bainbridge's scheme before the "schoolboy" and Decatur's eyes gleamed with the dawn of a great idea.

"Let me sail into the harbor and burn the *Philadelphia* down to the water's edge!" he begged.

The Commodore snorted at this youthful folly.

"You would lose the *Enterprise* and your own fool life," said he.

But Decatur laughed boyishly. "Wait till you hear me out!" he cried. "I would not go on the *Enterprise!* I can load the *Mastico* with firebrands, dress my crew as Maltese sailors and sail into the harbor without arousing any suspicion."

"You would go aground on another reef," growled Preble testily, but his eyes glowed.

"No! We have the *Mastico's* own pilot captive. He knows the reefs as you know Boston Harbor! Let me go! My father was the *Philadelphia's* first Captain. Let a second Stephen Decatur put an end to her."

"And if you fail?" asked Preble gruffly.

"We shan't fail!" Stephen declared with all his "schoolboy" confidence.

"The ketch is built for speed. We can fire the frigate and out-race any boat out of the harbor. Before the Turks smell smoke we shall be back under the *Constitution's* guns!"

At this point Captain Charlie Stewart came on board. The Commodore had summoned his officers for conference and one by one they now appeared.

Each applauded Decatur's plan. Each craved the distinction of executing it. But Preble gave this honor to Decatur. As Stewart had been on hand next to volunteer for the expedition, Preble assigned his brig, *Siren,* to accompany the *Mastico* and stand by to rescue the crew if the corsairs suspected trickery and destroyed the ketch.

Lieutenant Isaac Hull, who had made a name for himself in a similar mad deed in the harbor of Santo Domingo, now suggested that,—as appropriate to the escapade,—the name *Mastico* be changed to *Intrepid,* and *Intrepid* she remains in navy annals to this day.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE "INTREPID" TRIES HER FATE

STEPHEN DECATUR returned to the *Enterprise,* explained his purpose and called for volunteers. Without an instant's hesitation, every man in the crew stepped forward. This proof of their devotion so touched the daring young lieutenant that he had to pause a moment to struggle with his emotion. He then picked sixty-two seamen, among them, of course, Reuben the tried and true, who grumbled at the whole affair as a fool's errand. Just as Decatur was leaving to choose his officers, a young boy ran up and begged so hard to be taken that Stephen paused in surprise. It was the same Jack Tar who had wiped the tears of the little Greek slave girl.

"Why do you want to go?" Decatur asked curiously.

"I'd like to see the country," was the boy's odd explanation, and the quaint notion struck Stephen's fancy.

"Report with the rest," he said indulgently

and although Reuben complained that this was no orphanage outing he complained to thin air, for Stephen had gone off, his mind on picking officers.

There was a wide choice to draw from, for every officer had offered himself.

To James Decatur's chagrin, his brother rejected him, thinking it only fair to give others a chance rather than greedily keep the enterprise a family affair. There also flitted across Stephen's mind the possibility—even the probability—of his own death, and he hesitated to expose Jamie also and wipe out the Decatur name entirely. Here in the midst of warfare, Stephen had a quick, clear vision of his mother's troubled face when she hesitated to send Jamie so far away from home as Philadelphia! James Decatur therefore was refused this time. But Captain Bainbridge's young brother, Midshipman Joseph Bainbridge, was appointed first of all to this opportunity of avenging his imprisoned brother Bill. Next called was Midshipman Thomas McDonough,—later to shine in Lake Champlain battles,—a young officer of brains and a most marked ingenuity which made him famous. Decatur then chose Midshipman Morris, a decisive young fellow who could think and act more quickly

than any other man aboard the *Enterprise,* not excepting Stephen himself. These were the men and officers chosen from Decatur's own schooner. He then went aboard the flagship *Constitution* and took five midshipmen from her, among them a cold-headed young fellow named Thorne and his lively companion, Anderson. Decatur, of course, wished for Dick Somers to act as his own aide, but Somers, on the *Nautilus,* was out of touch with them all, busily pursuing corsairs far away upon the Mediterranean and little guessing the wild plans now afoot with his best friend.

Lieutenant Isaac Hull was Decatur's next natural choice, but he had already won laurels at Santo Domingo, so, seeing Lieutenant Lawrence's disappointed eagerness, the fair-minded Hull generously suggested that Lawrence be given this chance instead. It was characteristic of Hull's whole chivalrous career that he should often be first to win glory and then generously step aside to afford some other man an opportunity for fame. He always showed unfailing good sportsmanship and a spirit of willingness to merge himself in team work rather than in plays to the gallery. He was ever quick to make way for others to shine in the leadership that always fell so readily to

him, and this resulted in two things: it reduced the string of triumphs that might have been added to his name and it made Isaac Hull one of the best-loved officers in the navy.

Decatur therefore took "Don't Give-Up-the-Ship" Lawrence in his place, and having chosen a surgeon, completed his roster.

With this crew, followed by Charlie Stewart on the convoy *Siren,* Decatur set sail for Syracuse, in Sicily, the American base, to take on supplies.

Here the *Intrepid* was loaded with barrels upon barrels of tar and pitch, while others of oakum soaked wet in oil and turpentine were rolled aboard with keg after keg of gunpowder. The least careless spark would have set her roaring.

It was a grim enough cargo that now displaced the *Mastico's* fair load of slave girls!

Water casks, ship's biscuit and salt pork—provisions enough for two weeks—were stored in the ketch, and there was bitter need, later, for every drop and crumb.

The *Intrepid* and the *Siren* left Syracuse to try their fate on a clear February morning. Several mornings passed before they sighted the Barbary coast. The treacherous harbor at Tripoli was reached one night just as a storm

was rising. Sicily's fair weather had given place to a gale as tempestuous as the Bashaw's own temper. Even wind and water here shared the hostile Barbary nature!

The Maltese pilot, Salvatore Catalano, shook his head. No man could enter that harbor and survive such a sea! He shrugged his shoulders and waved his hands in hopeless gesture. He would not pilot the *Intrepid* in. Decatur half distrusted him.

There were two narrow inlets to the bay: the Northern passage leading between double chains of rocks now hidden in churning foam; and the Eastern passage, between islands near the town. The *Intrepid* lay at the mouth of the roaring Northern passage.

Decatur called for volunteers to man the small boat and row out to investigate. Quickest to leap forward was the ever-ready Midshipman Morris, and he was forthwith sent.

The rowboat tossed like a chip on the savage waves as the spiteful sea boiled through the rocky way furiously until froth was whipped up upon the jutting fangs of rock.

The quick-thinking Morris was soon convinced that the pilot was right: no ship could make it with such seas running, and he labored back to the ketch to report it.

Reluctantly the *Intrepid* and *Siren* halted outside the harbor waiting for the wind to die.

But as if all the more enraged by the trespassing ships, the wind rose vengefully and beat them out to sea.

For over six days it battled the tightly furled sails wrathfully, and the wet ketch, badly drenched, proved crowded quarters for her crew. There was not room upon her for so many men. The sailors slept flat on the deck or cramped upon tops of water casks. The midshipmen slept on planks laid across powder kegs in the hold where they had just room to lie down, but none to sit up without bumping their heads against the deck. Decatur, Lawrence, the surgeon and the cherished pilot shared the tight quarters of the small stuffy cabin. Decatur did not like to think of the pitiful crowding that the slave girls must have undergone on this same ship thrown in among the roughest sort of sailors.

So they huddled together, for most of the time wet to their skins, and shaken violently hour after hour for six whole nights and days by the chop and slop of stormy waves and endured the danger and discomfort made worse by being devoured by vermin that infested the dirty timbers of the filthy little ship.

To make it all harder, provisions ran short for the coarse salt meat spoiled and most of the biscuits got soaked in briny bilge water, so that the men lived on cold water and the remaining hardtack. But,—as the gunpowder fortunately was kept dry,—the crew kept up courage, laughing and joking at their misfortunes, until at last the wind, exhausted, stopped and the welcome sun came out.

So back again toward Tripoli the two ships worked, close-hauled on the wind, and on St. Valentine's eve found themselves too far to the east and exposed to the guns of the walled town.

Stealthily they withdrew from the foe's range, and on the next afternoon they faced the enemy harbor for the third time and felt ready to begin at last.

Midshipman Thomas McDonough, always intensely devout, now led the men in earnest prayer. Kneeling upon the deck, his words chimed in gravely with lisp of water and creak of cordage. "Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, Thy blessing on this devoted enterprise, that if it be Thy will we may conquer in Thy faith and fear and to Thy glory,—*or else*"—his fresh, young voice rang out in dread alternative,—"give us grace so to take defeat and death that

after this painful life ended we may dwell with Thee in life everlasting," and even the surly Reuben joined in the hearty "Amen."

At the Eastern passage they bade good-by to their friends aboard the *Siren,* which was to wait outside this entrance for the exploit's outcome.

The parting between Decatur and Stewart was a particular wrench, for it was impossible to avoid the thought that they might never meet again. But after all, this was the kind of act they had both looked forward to since that day in Philadelphia when the *Betsy Ross* limped up the Delaware.

So they made their farewell as brief and casual as possible and with the *Siren* standing guard Decatur and his crew, disguised, slipped daringly into the dark harbor.

Before them loomed Africa, dim and mysterious in the darkening twilight. Sheer from the water's edge rose her forbidding fortresses and ancient castles while behind them, climbing up the abrupt hill to which the city clung, the white walls of Tripoli showed, graying, in the early starlight.

Up and down the steep and rocky hill rose Moorish castle walls and the shadowy domes and slender minarets of Moslem mosques,

against the gloomy background of desert mountain ridges.

The business of the harbor's day had quieted and the low bright stars of the African sky glimmered on vessels anchored for the night.

And there, among all the pigmy fishing craft and fantastic oriental xebecs, drooping-sailed Italian traders, and graceful-curving Egyptian galleys, the fated *Philadelphia,* flying treacherous Tripolitan colors, rode at anchor.

But it was not at her that Stephen looked while the pilot skillfully threaded the *Intrepid's* way through the dangerous Eastern Passage. Before the sun rose, Stephen knew his fate would be decided and that he might never see Tripoli,—or the United States again. In spite of his eagerness to undertake this desperate enterprise, sadness clutched at his young heart. At twenty-three one does not like to die and Stephen felt as if he had not yet begun to live. Africa seemed a weirdly different world from the serenity of the Old Dominion's forests. His thoughts were on the *Constitution's* masts.

But this was no time for dreaming. Success or failure meant life or death. If success and honor were to be won, his wits must be alert.

Decatur abruptly broke from gentle reminiscence to harsh warfare. His plan of action,

already well thought out and agreed upon beforehand, was this:

Pretending to be a native coasting trader, they were to steal up close to the *Philadelphia* and board her. Once on board they would all keep together in a body until they cleared the decks of foes. Once that was done, the boarding party would divide into three squads, each squad to fire a separate deck.

When objection was made that the ketch could not carry men enough to do this deed, Decatur only answered, "The fewer the men the greater the glory!"

Decatur himself, with two midshipmen, Izard and Rowe, and fifteen able seamen would stand guard upon the exposed upper deck and hold it against pirates, make sure all the men in each firing squad came up from below and returned to the *Intrepid*, and then, firing the last deck themselves, were to leap for the *Intrepid's* get-away.

Lieutenant Lawrence with Midshipmen Laws and McDonough and ten men were to rush down to the gun deck and set fire to it and to the forward storerooms and berth deck, while Joe Bainbridge with Davis and ten sailors put torch to the orlop deck next below, piling ward room and steerage with combustibles.

To the fleet Morris was entrusted a squad of eight to fire the cockpit and after storerooms.

Meanwhile cool-headed Thorne with the surgeon and gunners and thirteen jackies were to remain on the ketch to pass out the barrels and gunpowder and make ready for a quick escape.

Midshipman Anderson was to take the cutter and ward off any boats put out by the Turks.

Such was the plan. Now for a chance to execute it.

CHAPTER XIX

"THE MOST BOLD AND DARING ACT"

In entering the harbor they entered a trap. The narrow Eastern Passage was their only way out. The three sides, North, South and West locked them in. The "bait," the *Philadelphia,* lay at the extreme West, under the fort's heavy guns. All along the South threatening Moorish batteries kept armed guard over the harbor to blow enemies out of the water. On the North lay the Mediterranean, but escape that way was made impossible by menacing rocks that, like ravenous teeth, maliciously champed the evil sea.

As soon as the *Intrepid* touched off the "bait" the trap would snap. Down would thunder murderous fire from fortifications all along the South and West. The Southern cannon might drive them North to be crushed on the rocks. The Western guns would hurl them back past broadsides from the South. Moreover the "bait" itself was loaded. A full crew of pirates literally armed to the teeth

now manned the transformed frigate ready for action. All the *Philadelphia* cannon were double-shotted ready to be turned traitorously against her American countrymen. Besides this, the tall frigate was completely surrounded by small Barbary gunboats.

The task before the little *Intrepid* was not simply to sneak in and burn up a derelict, but to capture and destroy a large man-of-war in the middle of enemy batteries and battleships,—*and to get away again.*

On went the ketch upon this desperate mission, and under the fresh breeze it was plain that she would reach the frigate too soon. To arrive before it was dark meant fatal detection. To slow down now by shortening sail conspicuously in the middle of the bay would surely arouse suspicion. Decatur therefore ordered drags thrown overboard at the stern, and ropes were quickly tied to buckets and spare sails and stealthily lowered. The ketch slowed down. With straining sails she seemed busily bent upon making port, but the tugging at her drag ropes held her down judiciously.

And so she mingled with other craft upon the bay, seeming to be only another slave ship or a trader from Malta or Sicily with nothing more harmful aboard than olives, figs or

lemons. To all appearances she was like any other native ketch upon the bay. A half dozen Maltese sailors loafed upon her deck. Maltese was the pilot, familiar at the wheel. There seemed no one else on board. But, still and dark in the shadows on deck, men were lying pressed flat against the bulwarks; crouching motionless out of sight behind cabin and scuttle-butt, in and under the long boat, and by coils of ropes. Each one had dirk and cutlass and carried a boarding pike, and though every man had his brace of pistols, the order was not to use them, but to keep silence and fight hand to hand. Gunfire would alarm the harbor and set a hundred cannon booming. The order was "Silence," and the password "*Philadelphia.*"

There was only the gurgle of water, the flap of sail and creak of rigging as the ketch sped softly on. But now a new danger threatened. A silvery radiance filtering through a film of eastern clouds proclaimed the moon.

Catalano glanced at it nervously, then at the sails. He spoke to a shadowy figure near him.

"The wind is dying, and the moon rises," he said. "We shall be seen, becalmed and at their mercy. Let me turn her back while we are yet safe." From the shadows Decatur's voice spoke imperiously.

"We shall not be seen, and there is wind enough. Go on."

The pilot turned his wheel sullenly. This cause was not near enough to his heart to make him care to die for it, but he had no choice but to obey.

The ketch crept on like a thief toward where the *Philadelphia* lay at her moorings,

"A huge black hulk that was magnified
By her own reflection in the tide."

"Head for the forechains," came Decatur's low command as he lolled in costume against the rail. Catalano's quiet "Aye, aye, Signor," was followed by the ketch's shift out from the danger of the *Philadelphia's* guns.

As the *Intrepid* approached, dusky figures appeared along the frigate's rail, idly watching the ketch drift in to port. They were so close now that voices of the Turks aboard the frigate could be heard. One of them called down:

"What ship are you?" and every hidden man upon the ketch grew tense. Catalano answered coolly in the common dialect, half Arabic, half Italian:

"The *Mastico* from Constantinople, sorely wracked by storms. Six days the gale lashed us out to sea and we lost our anchors. It is

late now and the wind fails. Let us make fast to you for the night."

There was a murmuring aboard the frigate and a voice called:

"Impudent Maltese dog, a warship is no mooring!"

Then arose a jabbering in the Mediterranean dialect too rapid for the Americans, listening in suspense, to follow. A burst of laughter from the Turks testified that some witty retort of Catalano's had won his point. A Turk shouted good naturedly:

"Make fast then. But for to-night only!"

The tension of the Americans concealed in this grisly hide-and-seek relaxed. They were saved for the moment.

Then, just as their goal was all but gained, the wind died. The *Intrepid's* lateen sails languished and flapped. The ketch stood nearly still. As if by deliberate intent a little shore breeze rose, puffing against the loose sails, spatting the water back across her prow. The *Intrepid* lost headway, hesitated, halted, hovered uncertainly for a moment and then began to give way insidiously before the breeze. In another moment she was making sternway, the water widening between her and the frigate. The moon threatened every moment

to reveal the black forms of the hiding crew who kept their eyes anxiously upon Decatur. He gave no sign of dismay, but spoke quickly and quietly to the spry Morris.

"Lower the boat and make fast a line to the ring bolts at her bow."

Morris, in Maltese disguise, sprang to obey—and Reuben James, jealous of the midshipman's gift of always getting first to the fore, wedged himself into the boat. He caught the young Jack Tar by the scruff of the neck and flung him in beside them, quick-witted enough to see that no Turk would suspect anything of such a youngster. Reuben saved the occasion. He had knocked around in ports all over the world for more years than Morris counted a lifetime, and had picked up here and there broken languages and snatches of native songs. Rowing with a great show of leisure he sang as he pulled upon the oars some Sicilian ditty with a refrain too rollicking to suggest warfare. He did not hesitate to let his voice ring out loud and careless across the water. The singing sailor and little Jackie seemed anything but sinister.

As Morris was knotting his rope to the frigate's bow, another boat shot out from under her stern,—Turks at the oars. They were bringing the drifting ketch a hawser to make

her fast to the *Philadelphia's* stern. If they reached the ketch they could not fail to see and suspect. Reuben and the others quickly threw all their brawn on the oars and overtook the Turks. Reuben waved them back with graphic gestures explaining in his broken Italian that he would make fast. Glad enough not to be bothered, the others turned back. They had not seen the line already fastened to the frigate's bow.

If they had not, Turks on the *Philadelphia's* deck had. "Funny business," buzzed one to another. There was a pointing and murmuring and one of them shouted down suspiciously, "What brig stands yonder in the offing?"

Catalano called back glibly, "The *Transfer* from Malta," and the answer satisfied, for the Bashaw had really purchased the brig *Transfer* from the British and though expected every day, the recent storms had delayed it.

Catalano now kept up a running chatter about the storms and wrecks, wharf news of Constantinople, Sicily and Malta, and rumors of the American squadron.

The Turks hung lazily over the rail listening, and watching the ketch draw in upon the rope. The cramped Americans, breathless, waited, gripping their boarding pikes ready to

spring and then the moon burst through the last shred of cloud and flooded the whole deck! Looking down upon the ketch the corsairs saw her anchors plainly in the moonlight. A howl went up. Their commander's voice shouted:

"Liar, your anchors are not lost! What trickery are you hatching, deceitful Christian dogs! Cast off there!"

The line thrown along the *Intrepid's* deck was now grasped by every man in hiding and the ketch began to hug the frigate's bow. An Arab slid down the frigate's chains and swung his cutlass at the line. It did not cut through. The rope still held and the Americans still hauled upon it. The pirates could now see the ketch crowded with men and a yell of "Amerikanos!" rose. It passed from deck to deck upon the frigate in a flurry of terror and surprise. "Amerikano! Amerikano!"

"Ready, men!" called Decatur steadily. *"Board!"*

Out leaped every hidden man and made a dash for the frigate. Over the bulwarks and through the *Philadelphia's* ports they tumbled. Decatur himself jumped to the main chain plates and tripped and fell. Midshipman Laws, scrambling through a port, got hooked by his cutlass and had to stop to loosen it. He fell

behind a moment and Morris, ever fleeter than the rest, leaped aboard the frigate first.

Reuben, rushing up behind Stephen (whom he regarded as his special charge) in secret terror over danger to him, now jerked Decatur up from where he had slipped, with an oath for his clumsiness, and they with the rest swarmed aboard.

The surprise was so complete that the Tripolitans, off guard, were panicky. In accordance with the plan the Americans all together formed a furious flying wedge and charged with such a solid slashing of cutlasses that the corsairs, bewildered and separated, fled before them, flew to the rail and began with yells to fling themselves overboard. The cries and splashings were followed by black dots and silver splashes in the moonlight as they swam madly for shore. Anderson, in his boat, made silent havoc upon them with sword and pike.

"No prisoners and no quarter," was the deadly order.

The screams of Tripolitans caught in the hold like rats in a trap echoed through the ship as the midshipmen's squads plunged below. Out from dark corners savage pirates sprang only to fall back before the deadly teamwork of the

well-disciplined Americans. The decks were soon cleared.

But there was not a second to be lost,—the alarm was spreading. Swiftly the combustibles were disposed as planned, the flaming torches passed about the ship. The men below had scarcely time to reach the upper deck safely before the thick and greasy smoke from tar began to belch up and roll through every crevice. Sparks, heat, crackling—finally a roar—the *Philadelphia* was in flames before the *Intrepid* crew had all jumped off. Decatur was the last to leave. Making sure that every one of his men was safely out of the furnace and back aboard the ketch, he slashed the hawser that made the *Intrepid* fast with his own sword. She began to slip away swiftly under her crew's skillful mastery of wheel, sail and sweeps, and Decatur had to jump from the burning *Philadelphia* over the widening gap of water into the *Intrepid's* rigging among the flying sparks.

"Fool!" snapped Reuben, furious with fright.

The *Intrepid* raced away before the freshening land breeze which now whipped the flames up into a glare through the *Philadelphia's* rigging. The fire touched off the *Philadelphia's*

A Paramount Picture. *"Old Ironsides."*

THE LANDING PARTY SWARMS UP THE SANDS OF TRIPOLI.

own guns that, exploding wildly, discharged cannon balls into the streets of Tripoli and against the forts as if armed by phantom hands. In her hour of death the loyal *Philadelphia* thus took vengeance on her captors.

The conflagration lit the whole harbor and mercilessly revealed the flying ketch. She was the target for every fort cannon and every gunboat's cannonade, but excitement and false lights and shadows confused the startled gunners. Though the balls whistled and popped through rigging and water, exploding all about her, the *Intrepid* ran the gauntlet unbelievably unscathed. Only one ball struck her. It merely tore her mainsail. Not one man was hurt. Safe to the *Siren's* side she scudded and the pair were lost in the African night before the glare of the *Philadelphia's* pyre ceased flickering on Bainbridge's dungeon walls.

The expedition was almost unexpectedly triumphant. When the news reached the United States the country went wild, and Decatur, in spite of his youth, was made a Captain. Old Preble's delight was as energetic as his temper. He declared no schoolboy had ever played a madder prank, and as special honor appointed him to command the flagship *Constitution.*

No ship could have been as near to Stephen's heart as this, and under the shadow of her masts he wrote to Susan. From his letter she would not have gathered that there was any warfare upon the Mediterranean. He described with delicate appreciation of the beauty, the sea and sky, Africa's mountain peaks and white-walled towns, quaint street scenes in Syracuse and Malta, the amusing doings of Jackies and their mascots. He compared these scenes with Old Virginia and pronounced himself heartily homesick for the United States and her.

Of his famous deed he only said: "You remember William Bainbridge. He lost his ship in an unavoidable wreck. We could not let the pirates use her, so some of us undertook to burn her up. It made a glorious bonfire."

But when news of his "bonfire" spread over Europe, the great Lord Nelson, England's finest admiral, said heartily with true British justice even toward a foe:

"It was the most bold and daring act of the ages."

CHAPTER XX

REUBEN JAMES BRAVES A SCIMITAR

Decatur's daring act had, after all, not changed the situation much. He had simply taken from the pirates a ship which was not theirs to begin with and left them exactly as they were before.

Old Pepper Preble now stirred himself from negative blockade to violent attack.

"Decatur, we will bombard Tripoli!" he declared, banging his fist upon the mess table. Decatur, looking very young, slight and inconsequential beside the grisled veteran, demurred.

"Wooden ships are no match for stone walls," he ventured. "Our ships cannot even pass into the shallow harbor."

"Dammit all, then we'll get some ships that can!" roared the Commodore.

His flagship, *Constitution,* set off forthwith for Sicily, where Preble struck a bargain with the King for six small flat-bottomed gunboats and two heavy mortars. Back to Tripoli

scuttled this pigmy fleet manned by the "schoolboy" officers. Every schoolboy, fired by Decatur's exploit, now burned with eagerness to outdo him. This was the spirit that sent the six little gunboats spinning down the harbor while the *Constitution,* at the bay's mouth, kept them under cover of the pounding of her "Long Toms" that rained death into the forts of Tripoli. Flanked on each side by thundering mortars the *Constitution* burned a way ahead of her advancing gunboats into the pirate nest upon the bay.

For centuries the fearful corsairs had gloried in the reputation of being invincible in hand-to-hand scrimmage. A handful of schoolboys now dared contest that deadly title.

Wild with fury in the fight that now seethed beneath the Moslem guns, in very sight of the imprisoned Bainbridge and Porter (an American cannon ball had sent a shower of rock and mortar down upon Bainbridge's cot), Decatur signalled the gunboats to close upon the enemy. He laid his own boat alongside a corsair and shouted, "Board!" and leaped ahead of his quick crew over the gunwales of the surprised pirate. Slashing and hacking with desperate swing of cutlass and thrust of bayoneting pike, the Americans plunged down the enemy deck

like boys madly bent on winning some rough schoolyard game. The Turk's gunboat was divided down the middle by a long narrow hatch. Decatur's crew split in half and rushed the deck, in two sections, one on each side of this hatch, a pair of battering rams of smashing fighters, until the Turks fled before their onslaught and jumped overboard like frightened frogs into the blood-stained water.

With this gunboat captured, Stephen ordered his crew without a breath's delay, to leap upon the next. His furious assault soon captured this one also and he turned upon a third.

This one quickly struck its colors and Jamie Decatur climbed aboard it with a crew to carry off the prize. No sooner had he reached its deck, however, than the Turk captain, pretending to surrender (for these pirates had no code of honorable warfare), suddenly and before Stephen's horrified eyes, shot Jamie treacherously through the heart and tumbled his body into the sea. James Decatur never saw his mother's peaceful Maryland home again.

Blind with rage, Decatur made for his brother's murderer. The Turk was a very Bluebeard, gigantic and savage. His swarthy face bristled with a stiff beard. He wore a crimson turban and great hoop ear-rings

dangled at his dusky cheeks. Two murderous cutlasses were thrust through the sash about his baggy trousers, and he brandished a ponderous boarding pike. This monster charged on Stephen with the pike to disembowel him.

Stephen made a frantic, futile slash at the pike with his cutlass, striving to cut off its point, but his brittle blade snapped off short at the hilt, and with a yell the Moslem lunged. Decatur dodged, but was harpooned through his breast. He tore the pike's point out and pouring with blood, clenched the giant. They crashed together to the deck, wallowing over and over in a death grapple. The Turk shut down one mighty hairy hand upon Decatur's slim neck, squeezing his windpipe to finish him off like a dog at the throat of his prey, but Decatur, clutching the bandit's ear-ring, tore it out and with a scream of pain the Turk tried to hurl himself loose. For a moment Decatur straddled atop his foe, when a Tripolitan officer, dashing up, raised his curved and gleaming scimitar high to swing down and behead him. Stephen was at his mercy, and for a fraction of a wink it seemed that a mother was to lose both sons that day. But little things change the fate of a lifetime. Years before Decatur's kind heart had refused to kill a frightened

sailor. An echo of his good-natured assurance, "I'll only shoot you through the hip," hummed ever in the head of Reuben James. He never left Decatur's side and in this mortal struggle reached his old post all but at the expense of his own life. Pirates had broken both his arms,—they dangled useless in the face of his helpless and beloved captain. Then rough and sour old Reuben, quick as thought, flung himself forward, willing to lay down his life for Stephen.

As the scimitar glittered in descent Reuben thrust forward the only defense his crippled body could afford Decatur. He stuck his head under the Turk's blade and received the blow full across his skull and dropped. The second's interruption gave Decatur just time to squirm about and get his hand into one pocket and upon a small pistol which he cocked. His adversary had now heaved himself atop Stephen, who sprawled upon the deck, the pirate on his chest. Just as the corsair raised dirk to stick him in the throat Decatur writhed and twisted until he clapped his pistol against the upreared pirate's back. He fired and the bullet, piercing clean through his foe's body, lodged in his own shirt. The huge barbarian rolled over dead upon the deck. Stephen rose

dizzily, soaked in his own and the pirate's warm blood.

The death of their chief dismayed the Tripolitans. They threw down their arms and jumped overboard. Decatur towed his prize out to the defensive *Constitution.* It was a sorry victory for him that day, with Jamie gone and Reuben senseless.

The surgeon had done what he could for Reuben, who lay bandaged and unconscious. When a glimmer of consciousness finally did flutter his eyelids, word was sent to Decatur who hurried to his side. The sailors fell back respectfully as the hero approached, and more than one throat tightened when he bent above his rescuer unashamed of tears that streaked his own powder-grimed cheeks. Stephen leaned down to catch Reuben's feeble words, fearing they would be his last, and when he caught the choked whisper this is what he heard:

"You young fool of a lubber, can't I never learn you to use a cutlass right?"

Fiercely abusive of tongue and fiercely loyal of heart, the battered sailor closed his eyes. But Reuben did not die,—he was too tough!

Weeks afterward when Reuben was on deck again, Decatur publicly asked him what he

would like as a reward for his heroism. Nothing could have made Reuben more furious than this calling public attention to his deed! Embarrassment made him sullen. Other sailors were quick enough to prompt him. "A pocketful of gold!" "A bo'sun's berth," they suggested. But Reuben ignored them all.

One job he had that he disdained. His had been the task of handing out hammocks, stowed away with the boarding nettings along the bulwarks,—when the sailors were piped down for the night. Now he rolled his tobacco quid into one cheek and without glancing at Decatur grunted, "Let somebody else hand out hammocks."

It was the only thing he asked, but he won promotion in spite of himself.

This happened later. Just now he lay caring little for hammock or tobacco while the gunboat sped on toward the *Constitution* which signaled the officers to come on board. Peppery Preble paced the quarterdeck, furious that all but three of the Tripolitan gunboats had got away. He wanted results and little he cared for individual heroism then.

As Decatur walked toward the quarterdeck, the eye of every man upon the flagship followed him, for he presented a battleworn and grew-

some sight. He still wore the torn uniform of the battle, wet and red from neck to belt with his own and the pirate's blood. His face was smeared with blood and gunpowder. He was an unsavory sight, but the sailors stared with admiration for his heroism. Not so the morose Preble. He glared at Decatur in a mixture of wrathful disappointment and uncomfortable emotion. A battle always gave old Peppery dyspepsia!

Decatur saluted, "Sir, I brought out three gunboats," he said, and he thought he had done well!

Preble yanked him by the collar and shook him in temper like an irate schoolmaster with an unruly scholar.

"Aye, and why did you not bring me them all?" he growled.

Decatur turned pale at the insult. His hand flashed to his hip,—and then he wheeled abruptly and marched silently away. Outraged, he started to leave the ship, but the officers, crowding round, calmed him down.

"Don't mind old Preble," urged the even-tempered Hull. "You know very well he upsets the pepper box every time there's a scrimmage."

"Yes," added Stewart, grinning, "he's got too weak a stomach to stand the strain."

"He'll send for you presently and eat his words," Lawrence prophesied.

Sure enough, the cabin steward soon approached with the message: "Commodore Preble wants Captain Decatur below."

Decatur obeyed with reluctance and distaste. He went below, boiling.

He did not reappear again for so long that his worried fellow officers, anxiously discussing the affair on deck, felt inclined to investigate. Had the Commodore's fearful temper made some fateful move? Had Decatur's daredevil spirit flared fatally back? The suspense grew too much for the other "schoolboys." Hull made up a pretense to take him to the cabin. There he saw the old Commodore in immaculate uniform and the young captain, smeared and torn, gripping friendly hands together, in silence, tears on both their faces. Hull slipped back to report, "All's well!"

CHAPTER XXI

A FIRE SHIP

Dick Somers now itched to vie with the daring deeds of his lifelong crony.

When the attack on the Tripolitan gunboats resulted in nothing but Decatur's capture of three, Dick cudgeled his brains for a way to take all the rest of them at once, thus clearing out the pirate hornet nest and appeasing Old Preble's insatiable demand. He devised a mad scheme, wilder, more daring and unspeakably more desperate than Stephen's brilliant exploit. His plan was to sail a floating mine into the very heart of the Tripolitan flotilla and explode it, shattering all the gunboats at once.

He called Decatur aboard the *Nautilus* to discuss the plan privately.

"My idea, Steve, would be to take your *Intrepid,* load her with powder and shot, sail her into the midst of the cruisers, set her fuses, escape in boats as best we may and let her blow up."

"You would never come back alive," Stephen protested.

"You ran the same risk," Somers insisted. Privately Stephen felt that his own plan had been thought out more precisely and had offered a more practical possibility of escape, but while he hesitated to criticize Dick's plan in the light of his own, he dreaded to see his best friend enter what seemed certain death.

Somers, however, was impatient at Decatur's protests. "Let us row over to the *Constitution* and lay the scheme before Preble. He shall decide whether to try it or not," Stephen hedged.

Accordingly the friends interviewed the impetuous Commodore in his cabin.

There had been political rumors of a possible shift of Commodores and squadrons in the Mediterranean, and the young captains took this opportunity to assure Preble of their appreciation and approval of his tactics and their devotion to him.

To this the gruff old Commodore only said testily:

"Well, well, get on with your scheme."

Somers outlined it as far as he had thought it out.

"Take all that shot and gunpowder among the enemy, eh," grated Preble, his uncertain temper beginning to curdle. "A fine notion!

They are short of powder now. If they catch you they will have powder enough to last them for a year's warfare! Hm!" he snorted.

"They will never capture it," said Dick simply, "because if they take us we will blow it up."

"And yourselves with it," said the Commodore acidly.

" 'I regret that I have but one life to give for my country!' " Somers quoted with a smile.

"Don't you suppose," snapped Preble, "that blowing up officers is a worse loss to your country than some paltry powder?"

But as the plan was unfolded, revealing the young officer's devotion and willingness to die if necessary, for a plan that might,—and might not—settle the pirate problem, Preble's shrewd old eyes reddened with emotion and impulsively he shook the hands of both young officers violently. "Gentlemen," said he, "I apologize for the slight in ever calling you a set of schoolboys." He flourished out a huge handkerchief and trumpeted upon it loudly to hide his feelings.

Decatur laughed, "We have had an able schoolmaster!" said he.

Somers returned to the *Nautilus* with per-

mission to try his mad plan, and he had his crew piped up and aft to call for volunteers. He made a brief address and as he spoke his face glowed with the unearthly light of a martyr going gladly to the stake.

"Men," he said, "I have the honor to take the lucky and glorious *Intrepid* on another expedition. She will carry a hundred barrels of powder and a hundred shells, pitch and turpentine and kindlings into the midst of the harbor shipping and will be set on fire. The crew will escape in small boats. She will never be captured. If worse comes to worst she shall be blown up with all on board. I want volunteers from men not afraid to die."

A forlorn hope has never lacked ready volunteers. Just as the crew of the *Enterprise* had stepped forward to the last man, the whole crew of the *Nautilus* stepped forward now for Dick to pick his choice.

The attempt was to be made that very night, for the dusk settled down drear, moonless and foggy. The *Intrepid* was hastily converted into a veritable "inferno."

Pitch and kindlings were piled high upon a bed of oakum drenched in turpentine. Over this she was packed with all the gunpowder she could hold, while shells and broken iron scraps

were laid on top. Fuses were carefully laid. Just as she was ready to start Stephen and Charlie Stewart came alongside in a small boat to bid their boyhood friend good-by. It seemed a long, long time ago that they had sworn vengeance on the *Dauphin's* foes back in placid Philadelphia. As the moment came to part, their hearts sank with sadder foreboding than had depressed Stephen and Charlie on the *Siren.* Some intimation of disaster seemed to crush down the spirits they tried hard to keep sprightly.

A quick clasp of warm hands, a few terse words, then impulsively Dick drew off a ring that he had worn for years and cut it into three pieces. He handed one piece to Stewart, another to Decatur and pocketed the third himself with a wistful little smile. "Keep them in case—" But Decatur broke away sharply and left the ketch, unable to speak or hear another word. In silence he and Stewart rowed back to the *Constitution,* and as Somers sailed away Decatur went into his cabin, shut his eyes to the departure, and, flinging one trembling arm boyishly across his face, broke down and cried.

CHAPTER XXII

INFERNO

Once more the *Intrepid* passed into the enemy harbor. As the *Enterprise* and *Siren* had both had their turn in action, this time the *Argus, Nautilus* and *Vixen* stood guard at the harbor's mouth to rescue the ketch's crew.

With a quiet farewell the men of the death ship sailed away from them into the night and the fog. Torches were prepared and Somers called his men:

"Are you ready?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Then God bless the United States and have mercy on our souls!" and he headed for the Barbary gunboats.

Their friends aboard the lurking brigs watched the ketch's sails melt into the fog until their ghostly outlines vanished. Like a phantom ship she faded from their vision and with her going a pall of dread settled upon those waiting. They spoke little and in whispers, eyes straining through the night. There was

an ominous hush across the dark, lapping wavelets. Then, like heatlightning, a distant cannon flashed and the thunder of it followed, rolling and reëchoing across the bay.

Suddenly, *"What's that!"* some one aboard the *Argus* cried harshly and all jumped nervously as the cry shattered the silence. A lurid glare of light had flamed up and dropped. The watchers scarcely breathed, and then—"Boom!" the shock of a tremendous explosion shook the water until sailors staggered on the decks. The brigs trembled at their cables like frightened horses tethered. The violence of the crash sent the ugly water swirling and in the vivid glare that followed, the *Intrepid,* her sails ablaze, was seen thrown high out of the water as if in mortal agony. She reeled and collapsed, a thing of fire, shuddering at the reverberations of her own exploding shells. The plop-plopping of missiles falling wild and hissing in the water made the mysterious fog hideous with unknown horrors. Then quiet,—broken by renewed hiccoughing of occasional remaining shells,—and as suddenly as it all began it ended. Dead silence, even from the Barbary forts. Darkness, wet and grewsome. Only the creak of cables and drip of moisture on metal.

The men in the brigs hung listening for the sound of oars. Sailors climbed overboard hearkening for an approaching rowboat. No sound. Hour upon hour all night long, strained with suspense, the watchers in brigs and searching rowboats waited, listened,—prayed. Not one of those aboard the fireship returned from that inferno to explain the mystery of what had happened.

Dawn smeared through the fog and revealed the broken hulk that had once been the saucy slaveship *Mastico*. Beside her, overturned like great dead sharks, bellies up, floated two ruined Barbary gunboats,—that was all. Not even a single floating corpse.

The *Argus* and the *Vixen* and the *Nautilus* filed back again funereally to their flagship to report, "Lost with all on board." Nothing more was ever known of what had happened, whether the attempt had been made successfully and the ensuing explosion and suction of water about the floundering ship had scuttled the rowboats and drowned the men,—or whether, seized by pirates, the desperate band had blown themselves up, or whether perhaps some premature spark precipitated disaster.

Days later the Bashaw, half-maliciously, allowed poor Bainbridge to identify bodies,

washed ashore, before their burial on the Moslem hillside. Some he knew,—some he guessed at,—one was unrecognizable save for a little piece of broken finger ring still lodged in a shred of clothing.

PART IV

HER TASK DELAYED

I have not yet begun to fight!
—John Paul Jones.

CHAPTER XXIII

"OIL" FOR "PEPPER"

"PREBLE is recalled!"

Decatur sprang to his feet as Stewart breathlessly proclaimed this, and fairly shouted:

"*What!*"

"*Recalled,* I said! Our squadron goes home now," he continued bitterly, "just as we've got the Turk dancing on a hot iron, and Commodore Barron with a new squadron comes along, finishes the job we've bled for and gets all the glory of accomplishment."

"Politics!" said Stephen searingly.

"Politics!" yelled Stewart, "of course it's politics! Congress has some fine little notions," and his mouth was grim.

"Barron! What Barron?" demanded Stephen.

"Samuel. Brother to your friend James," said he with a malicious grin.

"There must be some mistake," declared the hero of the burning *Philadelphia.*

It was no mistake. Before any of the officers

in Preble's squadron could believe it they were being replaced and the rival fleets met at Syracuse.

There was plenty of bad blood between the crews of Preble's ships and Barron's and many a fisticuff ensued between sailors on wharf and in tavern. The officers, more restrained, were no less bitter.

Decatur and the Barrons, meeting at the naval base, exchanged frosty greetings. Barron's chilly congratulations on Decatur's deed were swept aside by Decatur's curt assertion that if Prebele were allowed time till the stormy season cleared, his squadron was ready to finish the task they had begun without interference. Hot words followed and Decatur left angrily, his state of mind further soured by the implication that there was some understanding between James and Susan. This rankled, and Stephen's voyage home in spite of his captaincy of the flagship *Constitution* was dismally gloomy. He was returning without Jamie, without Dick, and now Susan seemed lost to him.

Commodore Barron sat down at the Tripolitan rathole, stopped up the rats inside and proceeded with a stolid do-nothing policy. He was recalled by an impatient government and

the energetic Commodore John Rodgers sent. Rodgers at once got in touch with the American consul, Tobias Lear, and the two started negotiations with the untroubled Bashaw, coaxing instead of threatening, for Bainbridge's release. Warfare had failed, two years' imprisonment had passed and Rodgers and Lear concluded that it was better to pay any price and save the *Philadelphia's* men alive than let these impotent battles go on and on indefinitely until American bones bleached in the prison graveyard.

Through the good Danish consul rumors of blockades and negotiations filtered in through prison bars to Bainbridge and Porter, and they often sat in the dungeon cell, filling empty hours with the mock warfare of chess or tit tat toe upon the stone floor and discussing the United States' policy toward their rescue.

"For my part," declared Bainbridge, scratching an X in one square with a broken bit of stone, "I would rather rot here than have the United States humbled to pay any tribute but that of gunpowder to release me." He had grown thin and pallid with long imprisonment, and though he had just passed thirty his worn face was creased with lines of old age and his hair had turned snow white. But though the

Turks had crushed his splendid youth and strength his spirit remained unconquered.

Porter blocked Bainbridge's X strategically with a shrewdly chalked O and replied,

"At least if we can't die for our country in battle we can die here rather than be rescued at the price of American pride and honor. It is not as glorious, but I suppose it might prove as useful."

And indeed the 315 men of their crew, who, in chains, had seen the glare of the dying *Philadelphia* and felt the mortal shock of the *Intrepid,* preferred death to dishonorable ransom.

Rodgers, however, was softer hearted. For himself, he would have felt as Bainbridge and Porter did, but for his fellow patriots, he could not reconcile himself to gamble for their lives. He saw in ransom a safe and sure way of reclaiming his countrymen and to this end he pressed the avaricious Bashaw. Bribes instead of shells now besieged the palace. In this Rodgers was urged on by the timid consul Tobias Lear.

For two years Lear had continued fearfully at the consulate, meekly paying tribute for his own safety. The flagpole, chopped down at his door, he did not venture to replace. Its hacked

stump stuck up reproachfully before him. To settle the present problems by ransom and to mollify the terrible Bashaw by tribute seemed to this man the easiest way to save American skins.

But this was not the stuff the fiery William Eaton was made of. If the United States would not whip the Bashaw from the sea, then, he swore, he would do it himself on land. A long time had passed since he had sneaked out of Tunis disguised in the false beard, skull cap, robe and slippers of a wandering Jew. He intended to come back again and bring the Barbary powers to terms himself, and back, sure enough, he came.

In Cairo he looked up Hamet, pretender to the Bashaw's throne, and artfully used Moslem court intrigue for his own ends. He worked upon this Hamet to rise, gather his devoted followers and assert himself to wrench from the present Bashaw a ruler's heaven-born rights. Hamet seeing in this the hand of Allah, assembled a crowd of supporters and off they all started across the desert towards Tripoli.

Two hundred miles across the harsh Sahara, the band plodded, swelling in numbers as the determined Eaton lured hordes of Arab bandits to join them with the promise of rich

plunder at the journey's end. This rabble of adventurers, robbers, murderers, tramps, visionaries, soldiers-of-fortune, led by a pretender to a throne and a very obstinate American patriot, dragged on and on across the sands, heated by sun and passion to quarrels, uprisings, and mutiny among themselves. But Eaton was a Revolutionary veteran, fired by the holy flame of patriotism and an unbending bad temper towards the Bashaw. A tough old campaigner, by the sheer force of his indomitable will and unwavering purpose he drove, cajoled, and coerced his rabble all the weary blistering way—on to the rocky Tripolitan frontier. Here he increased his forces by inflaming insurrectionists and rebels to join, until he had a lawless and formidable horde that swarmed toward the castled town. Armed men in rags and tatters, fearless Bedouins on fleet Arab horses, slaves, traitorous Turks, swarthy and unscrupulous Moors, powerful Berbers on stocky horses, muleteers, camel drivers, donkey-boys, with all their laden teams, poured down the bandit-infested mountainsides.

This mountain district, riddled as it was with robber caves, was a fit roost for such a horde. Before a few more suns had set and moons had

risen the town would have been overpowered by desperadoes, overrun with bloodthirsty plunderers, the Bashaw deposed and at their mercy, and prison bars smashed down. Eaton would have made good his threat. But Tobias Lear checkmated him.

With Rodgers before the castle upon the water and Eaton stealing up behind it on the land, in a few more hours these two Americans could have pinched the Bashaw between their forces until he squealed for mercy.

At this crisis the timorous Lear interposed. Though Eaton's savage host was creeping ever closer and closer, Lear hastily signed the Bashaw's agreement to free Bainbridge and his men for *sixty thousand dollars spot cash!*

Many of the naval officers disliked the blunt Eaton from a long-standing grudge of Revolutionary days and they hated now to see him come down from the hills and win glory for accomplishing in a single bold dash what the navy had failed to do in years of sea attacks.

Lear had always disapproved of Eaton's high-handed methods. But to do them justice it must be admitted that both feared the Bashaw's fury might wreck itself upon the helpless captives to avenge his enemies' attempt at violence. Fearful least he massacre Bain-

bridge and his men, the Commodore and Consul signed a pact to which Bainbridge would have preferred martyrdom.

To be sure the terms were *cash down* now and no future tribute. "At least," thought Lear, temporizing, "*that* point is gained—we pay no more blackmail after this."

"Well," said the wan Bainbridge cynically, "they have broken treaties before. Just wait. They will break this one sooner or later and we shall have it all to do over again. This was the time to put on the screws and settle the thing forever." He made a hopeless gesture of his bony hands, thinking sadly that his bad luck still held. It had been ill fortune to be captured. It was worse to be released on shameful terms.

Peppery Preble stormed up and down the *Constitution's* quarter deck, his temper rising to a roaring tempest. He whirled fiercely upon Decatur who stood silent and disgusted to think that the Bashaw had been treated with soothing oil instead of cayenne pepper!

"It is an outrage!" bawled Preble, "an outrage upon you and other officers who dared and died to put down Turkish tyranny!"

Decatur made no answer. He was gazing at the *Constitution's* masts. He knew now

that even nearer to his heart than Susan herself was the task for which this frigate was built.

He looked far up at the towering masts that had come from old Virginia, at the spread of her wide yardarms and stretches of storm-stained canvas.

"I'll go back to Tripoli again some day, old ship," he promised silently, "and finish the task you began."

CHAPTER XXIV

HOME AGAIN—AND SUSAN!

Piracy and tumult, bloodshed and gunpowder, all faded unreal from Stephen's mind like a nightmare gone upon awakening, when his long Arabian nights upon the Mediterranean gave way at last to the sweet and sunny peace of Chesapeake Bay.

The *Constitution* was majestically forging up the calm Potomac. Along the quiet shores shy blossoms of Virginia's fragrant woodlands stretched the budding foliage, green shade and and the whole restful scene seemed blessedly unchanged from that springtime years ago when Stephen first sailed to the Old Dominion for timbers wrought into the very ship he now commanded.

Summoned by Congress, the hero of the *Philadelphia* exploit was on his way to-day to Washington, the nation's new capital.

Leaving the *Constitution* at the Navy Yard, Decatur, Preble and her other officers were glad to go ashore and see the raw new town that

A Foremost Picture. *"Old Ironsides."*

"STAND BY TO REPEL BOARDERS!" RINGS THE CRY ON "OLD IRONSIDES'" BLOODY DECK.

was rising slowly and unpromisingly from the swamps.

They roamed curiously along the mud tracks of future avenues that spread like wheel spokes from the hub of the unfinished capitol.

Only the capitol wings, of which George Washington himself had laid the corner-stone, were finished to give the strolling officers a hint of the building's future grandeur, and no hint at all of impending war when British soldiers were soon to set that edifice in flames. A rough clearing in the woods,—a built-up swamp, one tavern, the White House, some dwellings, the unfinished Capitol and a temporary wooden War Office rebuilt after the first burned down,—this was the national capital as Decatur saw it then. He surveyed it proud and satisfied that the new city had been given the name of Washington who had so often urged a navy office in the wooden war building and who had only lived long enough to see the launching of that navy's frigate *Constitution.*

Decatur's business at the Capitol was one which he was too modest to mention. On the following day however there was a great stir of coaches and carriages whirling in from Congressional mansions out Georgetown way, and up "the Avenue"—then only a mud roadway

through an alder swamp. Officers mounted, soldiers and sailors afoot in brave and bright array, marching to sprightly trill of fife and boom of drum, all made the Capitol,—in spite of its scaffoldings, ungraded mud heaps and scattered piles of rocks, sand and lumber,—a colorful scene gay with uniforms and banners.

House and Senate assembled together with imposing ceremony to bestow upon the nation's hero a token of his grateful country's esteem. Civilian mingled with the military and military uniforms vied with the navy's in presenting a brilliant spectacle before the President and dignitaries gathered to honor Decatur's "conspicuous bravery in action." The gallery was thronged with visitors astir with patriotic fervor, peering and craning down to win a glimpse of the embarrassed young officer upon the platform.

Before him, in the audience, sat the sternly erect figure of Commodore Stephen Decatur, Senior, beside a slender lady in black, both gazing up in pride and grief at young Stephen now their only son.

Behind Stephen sat Peppery Preble in a truly genial mood, ready to rise and expose with warmest praise all Decatur's prowess until the blushing hero, fairly squirming with

confusion could scarcely find a place to cast his eyes. Shoulder to shoulder with Preble, and the subject of awed gaze and whispered comment, sat Bainbridge, tragically thin, wan and white haired, mute testimony to the outrages Decatur had struggled to avenge.

Gazing down upon this scene from the visitor's gallery, sat a pretty and animated girl with an officer in the uniform of the British Navy.

"There he is—there, the one on the end," the girl pointed, "he hasn't changed much since I knew him."

The Englishman peered down obligingly, his strong ruddy face aglow with honest appreciation for the American whom his illustrious countryman had called "most bold and daring."

"Ah," said he in his pleasant voice, "so that is the great Decatur, eh."

But now there was a rustle and silence as the Chaplain rose to open the occasion with a prayer long with patriotic sentiment, after which pent up feelings were released in burst of song as a hymn resounded to thousands of lusty voices. Preliminary introductions and speeches dragged on in more or less of a haze to the girl who watched, absorbed in thoughts that

kept her eyes luminous and her cheeks scarlet.

At last Captain Decatur himself was called on to rise. In spite of his grandeur of dress uniform, his new and mature bearing of strength and dignity, to the girl he was the same Stephen of Virginia forest days.

In spite of all this pomp and ceremony, the girl thought inconsequentially, Stephen's wilful hair still stuck up boyishly behind. It was not so much the hero of Tripoli, as the companion of Norfolk days, that the girl watched presented with a gift sword of shining blade and jeweled hilt. His short manly speech of thanks had in it just enough charm of modesty and embarrassment to set both Houses and all the gallery into a storm of delighted applause.

It seemed to Susan as if the throngs of dignitaries would never be done with Stephen and let her grasp his hand. The tall Englishman with her kept the crowds from jostling against her with adroit turns of his broad shoulders, towering above the many officers and ladies who were pressing toward Susan, to shake a hero's hand. At last, however, Stephen was free and his startled eyes leapt suddenly to her. Suspicious always of her officer escorts, Stephen now eyed the gallant Englishman's uniform, puzzled, and heard with a pang Susan's blithe

introduction: "This is Captain Carden of His Majesty's ship *Macedonian.* I hope you two are going to see more of one another."

Stephen resentfully wondered why, but "coming events" they say, "cast their shadows before," and Stephen was surely destined to meet this Britisher again.

There was a ball at the White House that night in honor of the hero of Tripoli, and Susan, who was now a decided belle in Georgetown and Washington society, was there, besieged by dance partners.

The gold and white ballroom was brilliant with elaborate costumes shifting to and fro in the glow of a thousand lighted candles that gleamed from the dangling glass prisms of sparkling candelabra. Beneath these great crystal chandeliers groups surging gayly over the shining floor were multiplied many times their numbers in the gleaming depths of grand and massive mirrors.

Doubling itself in a mantel mirror, Napoleon's clock, given to Lafayette, was ticking away peaceful seconds racing on toward war —war during which this mansion, burned by British and rebuilt, was to be first painted white to hide the scorch of fire,—from which it later won its familiar title "White House."

Presided over to-night by President Jefferson, whose tall red-headed figure was conspicuous in towering above other men there, the White House, plain gray Virginia stone then, reflected a truly European finish and splendor in strange contrast with the rough pioneer town it crowned.

Different indeed were ballroom and halls to-night from those first days when Mrs. John Adams wrote home discouraged: "It is superb and dreary beyond endurance, and, can you believe it, surrounded by forests, we cannot get stovewood or fire place kindlings for no one can be had to cut and cart them!" Now, complete and comfortable, it was well equipped to extend ceremonious hospitality.

So, in honor of Captain Stephen Decatur, the Executive Mansion rang that night with music and gay festivity in unthinking prelude to approaching war, a war in which "Old Ironsides" was to win that famous nickname.

Her captain now however had his thoughts on anything but war. It was Stephen's turn to feel that throngs would never be done with Susan and let him clasp her hand alone! It was not until the end of that momentous evening that he succeeded in achieving moments alone with the lady of his dreams. With chaperons

at a discreet distance Stephen sequestered Susan in a secluded corner.

They sat long, absorbed in one another. Susan had again played her trump: "Tell me about Tripoli—it is so fascinating!" Stephen told her and retold her in detail. He talked on and on of the Bashaw, the honor of the United States, the devotion and daring of all of Preble's men, and he told her in great particular exactly when and where and what he had so often thought of her. And now,—the British Naval officer looming up in the background obviously in search of Susan, Stephen felt impelled to say something on which he had intended to consult her father and keep for some evening at Woods Edge. But navy life was uncertain: here to-day, to-morrow he might be ordered to Gibraltar, and in the rush of feeling that burned him this first night back with Susan, he found himself floundering through a proposal which has become a classic.

"Susan," he said, "I love you,—I loved you in Philadelphia that first day. I loved you in Norfolk,—I loved you most of all far off in Tripoli, and I love you now as I have never loved but once before in my life. Would you—could you, be content to accept second place in my love?" (Susan stiffened). "*For the first be-*

longs to my country." (Susan relaxed). "Before I had the happiness of knowing you I had already made my vows to my country, and if I proved unfaithful to *her,*—I would not be worthy of *you,* dear. But if you could be satisfied," (he pleaded) "with second place in my devotion it shall be yours, dearest, dearest, exclusively and forever!"

The approaching Englishman was almost upon them when Susan with a final show of spirit tried to look up saucily into Stephen's eyes and found her own wet with tears.

"Stephen," said she, with mingled mischief and tenderness, "I shall be proud to accept second place in your heart, and I give you in return second place in mine: *the first belongs to my country!*"

CHAPTER XXV

THE AISLE OF CROSSED SWORDS

Triumphant after years of devotion to Susan of the Frigates, Stephen was impatient for the "happy-ever-after" ending. Never knowing when his squadron might be ordered to far distant ports, Captain Decatur demanded an early wedding,—and won.

Now that Stephen was a national hero there were crowds upon crowds who would have thronged to the ceremony had a big society wedding been chosen, but Susan did not want it. Stephen belonged to his country and the public, but at least for the brief eight minutes necessary for the marriage service, Susan wanted him all to herself! She declared they were not staging a public entertainment, but plighting their troth to one another "till death them did part" and death was not a word to be mentioned lightly to the wife of a fighting naval captain. No, said Susan, they should have a quiet little wedding with nothing to divert their thoughts uneasily from the solemn vows they made.

Stephen was inclined to favor Pepper Preble's suggestion that they be married aboard the *Constitution,*—doubly appropriate since Susan had furnished timber to build the ship Stephen now commanded.

In the end they compromised. There was to be a small wedding at old St. Paul's where Stephen had first seen Susan in Norfolk. Afterwards the officers of the *Constitution* were to give a banquet in their honor aboard the ship, and preparations for these festivities bustled ahead until the broadly beaming black cook fairly rattled the galley and the cabin steward,—the one who had recalled Decatur on the day old Preble shook the schoolboy captain by the collar,—outdid himself.

Within the church pews were packed with Susan's relatives, good neighbors like the Barrons, school friends, and mutual navy friends, among whom those in British uniform were noticeable.

Stephen's father and mother sat in front upon one side of the aisle while on the other Susan's mother, a filmy handkerchief tremulously dabbing the traditional tears, wondered feverishly whether Sappho had given a last minute successful twitch to the bridal veil!

Behind Mrs. Wheeler was a seat reserved for

Sappho herself, while already ensconced were the cook and her twins and other house servants who had been but scampering pickaninnies when Stephen first visited Woods Edge.

Though Susan had two pews full of these dusky and devoted admirers, Stephen was not without loyal and humble supporters of his own. At the last minute Reuben appeared at the church door resplendent in pig tail, blue jacket and round hard shiny sailor hat with *"Constitution"* painted on its fluttering ribbons. With him he dragged the young Jack Tar of *Intrepid* fame, to whom he mumbled and grumbled unceasingly that it was a sin and a shame to have a fighting man grow soft with this marrying foolishness. At least, he conceded glumly, Captain Decatur might have had the makings of a good naval officer in him before but there would be no hope for him now. Marry off an officer and you spoil him, was Reuben's lament. If Sappho was flustered and sniffling openly during the service, Reuben contemptuously kept his leathern cheeks dry; but had Jackie noticed him instead of keeping eyes glued upon the vision that was the bride and the grandeur that was the groom, and best man Capt. Stewart, he might have concluded that oddly enough Reuben's Adam's apple had

gotten fouled in its rigging! Reuben, absolutely ignoring the existence of the bride, had given a wedding present to the groom direct. He had made a surly presentation to Stephen of a wicked Turk scimitar with keen Damascus blade which he had wrested from a pirate in a bodily scuffle.

"Here, take this," he had offered it, ungraciously, "you can't do nothin' with that tin and tinsel toy the government made all its pow wow about. If your old sword smashed on a boarding pike, this new fol de rol would snap in two on a ship's biscuit. You never was much good at fighting at best," he said severely, with all the appalling frankness of a sour old friend, "and now with your mind on sweethearting you'll be no good at all, but you might as well have a blade that can cut hide if you hope to save your own," and interrupting Stephen's thanks he hurried on crossly, "Not but what you're just as handy with a cutlass as a cow with a musket." So saying, and rolling his tobacco violently into one bulging cheek, he had turned on his heel and stalked off.

Needless to say, this gift and Jack's souvenir splinter of the lost *Intrepid,* Decatur prized more highly than any of the more elaborate wedding presents received, many of which, from

men in the service, were displayed aboard the *Constitution.*

Reuben and Jack therefore, feeling that they had done the right thing by the groom, now sat staring through the ceremony, openly craning for a glimpse of the newly married pair as, amid a flutter of excitement in the congregation Susan, prettier than ever, clinging tight to the blue sleeve of her proud young captain, who saw nobody in the church but her, passed out under a flashing arch of officers' crossed swords.

"Wasn't the church pretty," gasped Susan, for want of anything better to say to relieve that momentary silence that fell upon them outside.

"What church?" asked Stephen in a daze, unable to take his eyes from her. "*Was* there a church?" he laughed.

With a reproachful little pout she stepped into the coach that was waiting to drive them to the wharf.

The banquet on the flagship followed the brief solemnization in the little church, and as the guests were rowed out to the *Constitution,* they were greeted by a salute of musketry and fanfare of bugles.

Lined up on deck were the smiling jackies

in their glossy stiff-brimmed sailor hats with dangling ribbons, bob-tailed blue coats and wide white trousers, standing at attention to welcome bride and groom.

The mess table was decorated with spring flowers spilling gracefully from a mammoth silver loving cup ornamented on one side with a spirited engraving of the *Philadelphia* under full sail, and on the other side inscribed:

Presented to
Captain Stephen Decatur, U. S. N.
by
his fellow officers
upon the occasion of his wedding
and
in commemoration of
his victory and daring
in destroying the captured frigate
Philadelphia
in the Harbor of Tripoli
Feb. 16, 1804.

As souvenirs for each guest, at each place there poised as lightly as if about to blow away upon wee lateen sails, tiny reproductions of the ketch *Intrepid* cunningly carved and rigged by the sailors of the *Enterprise.*

The wedding cake, darkly rich and plummy, crowning triumph of Susan's own cook, was as

large around as a cart wheel and Stephen, amid applause, was called upon to cut it with his new gift sword.

Reuben, now engaged in hustling up the younger Jackies who stood in line passing plates rapidly from hand to hand from the galley, now sourly remarked to his own mess mates that he thanked Allah and the Prophet (Reuben loved to roll the flavor of the Mediterranean under his tongue)—that the Captain wasn't foolish enough to take the edge of the good blade *he* had given him that might come in handy some day for chopping up something tougher than plum duff.

The banquet was a sparkling success. Susan's particular friends, looking especially attractive to-day to officers who had met them often before at Norfolk naval dances, sat around the table between such friends as Commodore Preble himself, gay Charles Stewart, Bad Luck Bainbridge and his fellow-prisoner Porter, the devout McDonough, Lawrence, and the generous and popular Isaac Hull. Nor did candlelight fall only upon American uniforms for Stephen found himself confronting Captain Carden, and with his jealous anxiety about that officer now removed, Stephen found him an exceptionally pleasant and interesting man. The

two fell to discussing amiably the relative merits of 18 and 24 pound cannon balls,—Stephen arguing against the other in favor of the 24 pounders.

Hull, to his own great delight, faced another Briton, none other than his chum of long ago, jolly Dick Dacres, and to the amusement of the guests this pair lost no time in locking horns over their old and favorite theme—British-American rivalry, squabbling in mock antagonism now over comparative merits of English and United States warships.

At length their good-natured argument ended in this friendly bet:

"Hull," Dacres bantered, "I'll bet you a good hat that you Americans lose your boasted *Constitution* if my ship *Guerriere* ever catches her!"

Among the Jackies who could not resist the temptation (in spite of Reuben's sternness) of stealing peeps at the festivities, was a young British bluejacket, Sam Leech, whom Captain Carden often took with him as body servant. This youngster, overhearing his superiors debating British prowess now engaged Reuben's favorite Jack in a debate so far from friendly that it ended in their tumbling over and over on the deck in seeking to prove their nations'

worth with their own young scrubby fists until Reuben hauled them both off by their collars.

Commodore Preble now interrupted Isaac Hull's and James Richard Dacres' brotherly passage-at-arms by proposing a graceful toast to "Anglo-American peace! May our warships never contend, may Captain Dacres' hat never be won or worn!"

The toast was scarcely drunk when Captain Carden sprang to his feet proposing, "Gentlemen, the American Navy!"

Dick Dacres quickly rose and, deeming this no time for toasts on peace or war, drank to the bride! There was now a general rising in toasts to the bride and groom, and Commodore Preble, his disposition, for the evening, at least, transformed from pepper to rare old wine, proved himself such a convivial toastmaster that Susan declared him a perfect dear and thought Stephen dreadful for calling him an old griffin.

"Oh, but he is!" Stephen insisted. "Ask him yourself about the time he shook me by the scruff of my neck like a terrier with a rat!"

After the laughter at Susan's pretty deference and appeal to "the griffin" the old man rose, beaming, and said that while the officers had all drunk to "the ladies, God bless 'em,"

he proposed that he and the ladies drink "to my schoolboy captains! May the name of each like Decatur's become immortal!"

There was now such patriotic emotion in the toasts as was especially fitting to bride and groom plighted to second place in each other's heart. When at last Decatur himself was called upon to respond, he proposed a toast, the climax of the evening, which has become history:—Rising, glass uplifted, Stephen Decatur spoke reverently:

"Our Country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right, but, Our Country, right or wrong!"

CHAPTER XXVI

COMMODORE BARRON STRIKES HIS FLAG

Cordial relations with Carden's and Dacres' country unhappily did not last long. Before two years slipped by it was evident that more than a *hat* was at stake between the rival navies.

England was in her death-grapple with Napoleon. He had sworn to invade her. To keep him out England had to surround herself with warships. She numbered nearly a thousand of these "wooden walls," and spent four-fifths of her whole income yearly to keep them in action. Truly hers was the finest navy in the world.

But British navy life was one of brutal treatment and cruel hardships. It was hard to keep the ships manned with the thousands of sailors necessary.

Some were bribed to enlist with "free grog and a pocketful of silver." Jails were emptied upon the navy to supply cannon fodder and save the country's expense in keeping prison-

ers. Many a man was kidnaped in seaport tap room or dark alley by unscrupulous press gangs from the ships. Still there was always the call for men, more men, and still more men. The warships never had enough. English captains soon resorted to holding up their own merchant vessels and stripping them of all of their crews but the few needed to bring the ship to port. The next move was to halt American ships and search them for British sailors, and then came the inevitable temptation to take American sailors too. In this way many a Yankee tar was hauled off to a life of slavery aboard British man-of-war from which he could never hope to escape except by desertion, and a deserter, if caught, was hanged at his ship's yardarm.

The sharp crisis with France now forced England to blockade all merchant vessels bound with supplies to French ports. England sent her warships to the American coast and kept them there as watch dogs to prevent shipping. Thereupon the factory towns of New England and the tobacco ports of the South began to howl. Thomas Jefferson made every possible move to negotiate peaceably for some settlement, until he was ridiculed and censored for his long-suffering patience.

To-day he would have been ranked high for his services toward "World Peace," but he had been born too soon for this point of view to be appreciated. Like John Adams he was sneered at for a pacifist! President Madison, succeeding him at the helm of the storm-tossed ship of state, sought peace by parley, and got himself denounced by his hot-headed countrymen and laughed at by belligerent Britishers for his pains.

At last when England had helped herself to *nine hundred* American ships and *four thousand* American seamen, war, long smouldering, broke into flames.

One February night, His Britannic Majesty's warship *Melampus* lay in wait at the mouth of the Potomac to pounce on stray merchant vessels. The night was heavy with a wet cottony fog, the surface of the waves invisible a few feet from the ship and the fog proved impenetrable to lanterns. Five American sailors, pressed into unwilling service aboard the *Melampus* slipped stealthily overboard and swam across to the Navy Yard to the American warship *Chesapeake,* which flew the pennant of Commodore James Barron.

By some subtle wireless of their own, these five secretly signaled or wigwagged word of

their success to fellow sufferers upon the Briton. A pair of white trousers hung upside down to dry in the rigging, a shirt shaken and hung on a rope in the sun,—some signal, somehow, reached and encouraged five other deserters who, too, reached the *Chesapeake* in safety. These ten were American sailors originally kidnaped from a United States vessel. They simply swam back to the protection of their own flag. Could that flag, or *would* it,—protect them?

"What's to come of this affair?" Commodore Barron was asked by one of his Lieutenants—Wm. H. Allen, an alert and aggressive youth. "I hear that the British Minister over in Washington has asked Congress, courteously enough, to return these deserters."

"Well," said Barron who was inclined to belittle the importance of the affair, "there is no international law, you know, requiring the surrender of deserters but the United States, as a friendly nation, agreed to investigate and return the men if they proved to be British. Well, they aren't British. All ten can prove that they were born and bred here in America and had been impressed from American ships, so when that was reported to the British Minister, it was explained that we had no reason

to hand over to him captured and escaped Americans."

"Then what?" persisted Allen.

"That's all. England has said no more. The matter is dropped. We shall hear no more of that."

"There will be other cases like it, though!"

"I suppose so!" Barron dismissed the matter carelessly.

His mind was occupied with conditioning the *Chesapeake,* an unlucky ship, always wanting repairs, which had laid long out of commission in the navy yard. Barron, now a Commodore, was ordered abroad to relieve the *Constitution* now patrolling the troublesome Mediterranean. Barron was plainly sulky that he had been given such a frigate as the *Chesapeake* for a flag-ship.

Putting her properly into commission for the long voyage and possible years abroad occupied months. Barron's time spent at the Navy Yard was not given over to careful inspection of detail of his ship's equipment and provisioning. These things he left to others while he strolled about occasionally in confab with his ship's officers Captain Gordon, and Lieut. Allen and cast a jealous eye at Decatur's trophies which ornamented the grounds then as to-day

—cannon from Tripolitan gun boats captured that fatal August when Jamie lost his life and Reuben saved Stephen's.

At last, one bright and breezy June morning, the *Chesapeake* sheeted home her sails and started down the river for Hampton Roads. Her decks were littered with a confusion of supplies intended to be stowed away during the first few days at sea, like many another vessel with orders from Washington to sail before she was fully ready. Last minute shipments therefore lay about the disorderly decks,—uncoiled cables, spare canvas, lumber, furniture, flour barrels and even chicken crates still laid where they had been hastily dumped on board.

Her crew was untried—just shipped for this cruise—full of untrained green hands, hardened and rebellious old salts, defiant young deserters and many new middies setting out upon their maiden voyage.

In passing Mt. Vernon the drums beat the signal for the gunners to fire the customary salute to the tomb of George Washington. In the general disorder of the whole ship it was discovered that not a single gun was ready to fire, and the unready warship passed Mt. Vernon in silence. Even then nothing was done about it. As the *Chesapeake* dropped down

Lynn Haven Bay she passed four British warships at anchor. One of these, like a wakeful watchdog rising with cocked ears and sniffing trouble, now hoisted sail, weighed anchor and set out after the *Chesapeake* as a hound upon the track.

Out on the open sea the *Chesapeake's* decks were still left in disorder while sailors were busily answering Captain Gordon's deep cries as he ordered the ship worked to windward.

"M'ns'l ha-a-ul! Let go and h-a-u-l!" his voice carried and the shrilling of the boatswain's whistles piped the crew to haul and board tacks.

Lieutenant Allen, the sharp-eyed, watched the oncoming H.B.M. *Leopard* curiously. Her captain too kept wearing ship against the strong headwind and as the *Chesapeake's* sailors hauled aft sheets the *Leopard* adroitly mimicked her. The *Chesapeake* was a slouchy ship, poorly manned, and the spry *Leopard* easily overhauled her and hailed.

"A des-patch for Com-mo-dore Bar-ron!" floated the cry from the British ship. Innocently supposing that the captain of the *Leopard* might wish to take this advantage of the *Chesapeake's* sailing to send some message abroad, Captain Gordon hove to.

Up came the *Leopard* and put alongside, broadside to broadside not half-a-pistol shot away.

The boarding officer was met at the gangway by a midshipman who, unsuspectingly, led him to the Commodore's cabin.

In the meanwhile, on deck, some middies noticed that the muzzles of the *Leopard's* cannons were not stopped by tompions but open and apparently ready for action. This was an ominous sign which the middies were too inexperienced to realize and nobody else reported it. Lieut. Allen, who was quickly suspicious, now set the men hustling to clear the decks of crates, chests, casks, barrels, and kegs, as quickly as possible, but there was more to be done than could be accomplished in a few minutes to put the decks in order.

Meanwhile the British officer presented the unsuspicious Barron with an order signed by the British vice Admiral to the effect that:

"All His Britannic Majesty's ships in American waters are hereby commanded to watch for and search the United States frigate *Chesapeake* for British deserters."

Barron was never diplomatic at best, and now angry and astonished, he was at his worst. All unprepared as his ship was to contest any point

with the bristling *Leopard,* he retorted haughtily:

"Sir, I have no sailors of yours! You might better busy yourself returning some of ours, and I tell you flatly," said he, snapping his fingers, "that no foreign officer can come on board here and muster any crew of mine! You are wasting your time and certainly mine. Good day!"

Without reply the Englishman returned to his ship. One glance at the *Chesapeake's* inexcusably cluttered deck told him that she was not ready for action.

Barron was in a fury. He yelled to Gordon to call the crew to quarters, but no sooner had the flustered drummers begun to roll and tat tat the call than Barron in rage snarled for silence. "Do you want to invite an attack and bring down a hornet's nest about our ears?" he said. "Have the men take their places without all this hullabaloo, keep them silent and ready but don't deliberately call for trouble!" The men therefore took their places in silence.

Now the whole crew had only been drilled in the call-to-quarters three times since they shipped. So now there was a confused and undisciplined running to and fro while the orderly drums kept still.

The new gun crew had never touched the guns except to find at Mt. Vernon that they were not equipped and that a good many were not even mounted.

It was soon discovered that the cannon could no more be fired now than at Mt. Vernon. Some were loaded, to be sure, but nobody could lay hands on any rammers, priming wires or fuses. A frantic search through jumbled stores failed to bring any to light. There stood the gunners behind a few loaded guns, unable to discharge them! All of which had been known when the salute at Mt. Vernon failed.

Such improvidence and negligence were criminal upon a battleship. While a futile hunt for gunners' supplies was going on, the *Leopard* hailed again, and Barron, determined to ignore the order, roared back, "I can-not h-e-a-r you!" Then he shouted to Gordon to wait no longer. Distinctly now came the shout, "The Vice Admiral's orders must be obeyed!" Stubbornly Barron replied through his speaking trumpet, "I do not understand!"

Under Gordon's orders the *Chesapeake* was beginning to make headway when again came the cry from the *Leopard* clear and distinct. Once more Barron temporized, hoping to slip away without more ado.

Disgusted with idle talk, the *Leopard* ceased hailing and without warning discharged a full broadside into the near-by hull of the uncertain *Chesapeake*. Crashing of wood, flying splinters, yells of agony, smoke, blood and flames told how the disastrous broadside took effect upon the helpless American. To the astonishment of the British, the *Chesapeake* made no answer. She could not. She lay as silent and harmless as a fishing sloop. And then James Barron lost his head. He ordered the gunners to fire and they could not comply. He ordered the *Chesapeake* to fly, but the *Leopard* had her.

The unprepared gun deck was a scene of frenzied rage and confusion. Maddened at their helplessness in the face of enemy fire that had them at its mercy, gunners and officers were working furiously to discharge at least one gun. No slow matches, linstocks or flints could be found high or low. The roar of cannonading, smell of smoke and powder, the ripping of timbers in a fresh broadside now deafened the crew. Finally some one had a bright idea and rushing to the galley heated a poker in the cook stove and raced back to the nearest gun. Still warm, it was jammed down the breech vent into the powder, but in the run across

decks it had cooled. The powder did not sputter. The idea was quickly and hopefully caught up. Lieutenants lined men in a living chain from gun to galley, and heated spits, pokers and wires were passed hastily from hand to hand and prodded into the balky powder. They all cooled too quickly to set it off.

Meanwhile the pounding of the *Leopard's* cannonades at such close range threatened to demolish the unlucky *Chesapeake.*

Unresisting she had to strike her flag. Before the colors fluttered down toward deck, Lieutenant Allen yelled, "I'll fire one shot anyway," and he dashed to the galley, seized a live coal from the stove in his bare fingers and tossing it lightly from one burned hand to the other he tore back to the guns and dropped the red and gleaming coal into the powder.

With roar and kick of cannon and the cheers of men, this, the one and only gun, was fired.

Two British lieutenants with their midshipmen promptly boarded the *Chesapeake* as her flag fell. Search for the deserters proved that only two of the ten were left on board as one of them had been killed by the *Leopard's* own fire and the others, chronic deserters, had already run away from the *Chesapeake* before it

had even left the navy yard. The two, however, were taken, and two more, at random, for luck, —all Americans.

One was hanged, one died in the British service and the other two, five years later, were returned to the *Chesapeake!*

Barron now expected his ship to be claimed as British prize property and was surprised when the English officer said: "No, we are taking no prize ships. We are only following orders to search for deserters. We have done so and regret that you made it necessary for us to use force. We should be glad to extend any aid we can, either by sending our surgeon to help yours care for your wounded, or our carpenters to help yours make repairs. We sincerely regret the damage we were obliged to cost you in our line of duty."

"Both sympathy and assistance" (reads an account of it) "were indignantly rejected and the disgraced ship went sullenly back to Norfolk bearing a sorely mortified body of officers and seamen."

"This must mean war!" asserted Allen, bandaging his burned hand in oil.

But neither country really wanted war even then, and though the *Chesapeake* was just one

of many such incidents, five years of official "protesting" were to elapse before any action was taken.

In the meanwhile the *Constitution* returned from her long cruise, and Decatur in writing home to Susan asked:

"Were you shocked to hear that your friend Commodore James Barron was courtmartialed for negligence on the *Chesapeake* and suspended from the service for five years without pay? What else could he expect? The man is incompetent."

As he crossed the *t's* of that last accusing word, the dark shadow of Fate fell upon Stephen Decatur.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE "CONSTITUTION" TAKES FLIGHT

"WAR!" cried Susan tremulously. "Oh, it can't be! They've talked war for years and nothing has ever happened before."

"I'm afraid something is happening now," said Stephen gently.

There was such peace in the moonlit trees tall and shadowy about Woods Edge—where Susan stayed on with Stephen at sea,—that rumors of war seemed unreal, impossible, fantastic.

The warm wind rustled through the grove of mighty oaks about the house—oaks resonant now with night sounds of a thousand quarreling katydids, trilling peepers, shrill tree toads and myriad summer insects. Peaceful with leaves stirring in the soft breeze they stood while their sister trees, hewn and bent to the sea winds, resounded to the hum of wind-blown ropes and canvas.

"War!" repeated Susan, and she shuddered. A whip-poor-will shrilled near by and Susan started. "Hush!" she said to it softly, then to

Stephen: "I'm not superstitious but Sappho says a whip-poor-will brings trouble, and war is trouble enough! Oh, don't go, Stephen! I am afraid!"

"Remember, dear, that we both belong first to our country," he said, groping for comfort.

"It is very well to say that!" she retorted with spirit. "You can see action, while I must stay at home with nothing to fill my mind but fear for you. There is nothing that I can *do*. It is always easier for men!" she grieved, "and are all our men getting into the thick of it?"

"Hull is captain of the *Constitution* now," said Stephen, "since I have been transferred to your old friend, the *United States*. Do you realize," he demanded, putting his arm about her, "that I first met you in the shipyard watching them build that same *United States?*"

"Do you think I am likely to forget it?" she asked affectionately, and added between a sigh and a laugh, "Poor James Barron!"

"Oh, poor James Barron," retorted Stephen, hardily. "He's not poor any longer. They will probably reinstate him and send him off to war now!"

"Oh, war is so harrowing," Susan grieved,— "think of Dick Dacres and Captain Carden,— it doesn't seem possible that you may be fight-

ing them! *They* don't seem like 'the *enemy*,' " she sighed.

But even as she said it, Dacres was hotly pursuing Hull over the ocean, bent on settling their longstanding debate under the cannon's iron judgment.

Bound up from Annapolis to join Rodgers' squadron at New York, Captain Hull was off Barnegat Bay one July evening when his lookout at the masthead shouted, "Sail Ho!"

"Where away?" called Hull.

"Four ships to the northwest and one north east."

"Ships of the squadron?" Hull asked.

"Can't make them out, sir."

The *Constitution* signaled to the ships supposed to be Rodgers' frigates, but strangely enough the aloof five made no answer.

As the *Constitution* bore slowly down upon them there was a quick alarm from the mast head, "They all fly British colors, sir!" And Hull promptly hove to.

He had a green crew newly shipped for this cruise and wisely risked no night encounter. Accordingly, the *Constitution* lay to until daybreak. Then as the sun rose the lookout cried a warning: "The British squadron has grown overnight, sir, four frigates, a brig and a

schooner and a ship-of-the-line, all standing down on us!"

Instantly there began a chase that won the *Constitution* great renown. She tried to flee before the oncoming enemy when suddenly every ship was dramatically stilled by the death of the wind. Becalmed they lay, motionless, pursuers and their prey—just out of gunshot, unable to give chase, and unable to withdraw, and so they lay all day long, every thread of sail set, and hardly breath of air enough to lift a pennant.

Men in the *Constitution's* rigging passed up bucketful after bucketful of water, drenching her sails the better to hold the breeze, but they hung loose there, wet and still.

The lone frigate stood motionless before her foes, like a "painted ship upon a painted sea."

And so the sun went down.

Meanwhile Dacres, aboard his vaunted *Guerriere* recognized Hull, and half chafed to overtake him, half hoped his friend could get away. The *Guerriere* could no more move than any of the others and still the dead calm continued.

Suddenly through the twilight, with no breeze to swell a sail, the *Constitution* seemed to move. Dacres could not believe his eyes. But surely the frigate, like a ghost thing, was slipping im-

perceptibly away! No wind,—no motion on any other ship, but the *Constitution was moving!* It seemed too uncanny to believe, but this is what had happened.

With night came fog. Under cover of it, Hull sent out all his boats manned with husky sailors at the long sweeps to row and tow the ship along. So "with a long, long pull and a strong, strong pull," the oarsmen labored to budge the ship. Then the men in the forward boats came near enough shore for sounding and another method presented itself. "Why not send out anchors ahead of the ship, and by pulling on the anchor cables from deck warp the ship forward?" some one suggested. But the ingenious Hull had a better idea.

The ship's carpenters were ordered up on deck and instructed to build a pair of enormous canvas umbrellas with wooden ribs. Every man on board who could ply a needle was squatted on deck helping the sailmakers sew the great circles of canvas securely fast to their narrow radiating ribs. Meanwhile all the hawsers on board were put together until they made two lines each half a mile long. One end of these was put through a ring in each umbrella handle. The other ends were held on deck. One sea umbrella was then lowered into the water and

towed ahead of the ship by a small boat, its long hawser being paid off from the frigate's deck until it reached its full length and the parachute was half a mile in advance of the ship. While the small boat towed the umbrella by a rope attached to its butt end the device was dragged through the water closed. But now the boatswain called, "Give way, boys!" and the umbrella was released from the rowboat. Immediately half a mile away, sailors on the *Constitution's* deck began hauling upon the long hawser and the umbrella flared wide open instantly, giving such resistance to the water that the frigate was slowly drawn forward. To prevent the canvas turning inside out, side lines like a parachute's were attached to the pull of the hawser.

As soon as the ship in this manner had crawled forward the cable's length, another small boat was making off quickly towing the second collapsed umbrella forward. When this rope reached its full length, the sailors on the frigate pulled upon it with might and main, still warping the ship forward without interruption while the other boat with the other parachute raced on ahead for the next relay. So, by keeping two small boats working back and forth like two buckets in a well, the *Constitution*

began to walk away uncannily, kept straight in her course by placing the umbrellas—or sea-anchors—first on one side and then on the other.

In the meanwhile other small boats continued towing away at the frigate also until she was actually making several miles an hour with no breeze blowing at all.

This was the secret of the ship's progress that so mystified her pursuers. When the British thought they had discovered the scheme they immediately set about copying it,—but they were deceived by the canvas sea-anchor. They too began kedging but they used their own heavy anchors, hard and slow to handle, and these necessarily required a course inshore while with her floating open-and-shut device the *Constitution* put independently out to sea. While the British sailors toiled at their massive solid anchors, the Yankee tars could tow their light, closed umbrella swiftly through the waves,—and by keeping it thus under water the enemy was unable to make out the secret of their celerity.

Nevertheless, the British squadron hung on tenaciously in the chase. Dacres was quick to imitate these tactics to the best of his knowledge

and skill, as was also Commodore Broke on the British flagship *Shannon*. Now the *Shannon's* crew, all credit due to her gallant commander, was a model of discipline and efficiency, which "by paternal care and excellent regulations became a ship's company as pleasant to command as dangerous to meet." She was a worthy foe of the star American frigate, and her crack gunners, awarded a pound of tobacco for every bull'seye, could sink a cask as it bobbed afloat, a mere speck in the distance. Before such a warship the *Constitution* needed all speed and skill and even then, the *Shannon's* cannon balls began to reach her, dropping now astern of her, now on this side or that and even ahead. One even tore a sail, but the Yankee sailors only pulled harder on the tow line.

So all the ships moved forward, wind or no wind. Sometimes a little teasing breeze filled the sails a moment and then capriciously dropped.

Kedging, towing, drawing wet sails taut to make use of the least whiff of wind, the *Constitution* drew further and further out of reach, and every time the *Shannon's* shots threatened to get her range, a providential little puff helped lift her just out of danger.

So for three days and nights, working sleep-

lessly and unceasingly, the men and officers of the *Constitution* urged their vessel on.

The ship's carpenter who made the canvas sea-anchor, Gideon Woodwell of Massachusetts, afterwards told of this chase himself, saying, "After seventy hours of very little variation in weather, a light southerly breeze sprang up. The boats were brought alongside, tackles hooked on and lifted out of the water; yards were braced to the wind and the ship worked to windward like a thing of life, the whole crew as merry as a hive of bees and looking back over the past seventy hours more like an excursion of pleasure than one of arduous labor and danger. Had it continued calm the whole English fleet could not have captured her," exulted he, and he had good reason to triumph.

But now, at a whim of the gods of wind and thunder, a furious gale whirled down upon the struggling ships. Hull tried strategy. Under the roar of the tempest's wind and lightning he furled all sail tight. The British in their game of follow-my-leader, hurriedly hauled down theirs too. No sooner was Hull sure that every British spar stood naked to the wind than up flew all his own again in a twinkling and away raced the triumphant *Constitution* and soon out-stripped her enemies.

Hull had swung aboard all his tow boats without either losing one of them or a minute in reclaiming them, while the English in their eagerness to make haste had cast all their boats temporarily adrift and had to go back and spend three days searching for them and picking them up again. So cock-sure had Commodore Broke been that the *Constitution,* a fat prize, was already his, that he had already told off an English crew to man her when captured. The clever escape of the sly American frigate was almost as unhoped for among her men as it was surprising to the enemy, but dodging New York (which the British had cut off), at twelve knots an hour she came flying exultantly before her foes, safely into Boston harbor,—Boston where her keel had been laid, Boston which proudly claimed her as its own.

Great was the patriotic rejoicing that greeted her adventure and soon every city in the country rang with such street songs as

> "'Neath Hull's command with a taught band
> And naught beside to back her
> Upon a day, as log-books say,
> A fleet bore down to thwack her.
>
> "A fleet, you know, is odds or so
> Against a single ship, sirs,
> So 'cross the tide her legs she tried
> And gave the rogues the slip, sirs."

PART V

HER "SCHOOLBOYS'" TRIUMPHS

"Our Country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong."

—STEPHEN DECATUR.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CAPTAIN HULL WINS A HAT

Hull only stayed in Boston long enough to take on supplies and find that there were no orders for him there from Commodore Rodgers. Then he put out to sea as fast as he could without orders, glibly explaining that he was afraid Broke's squadron would cork him up tight in Boston harbor. What he was more afraid of really, was that the timid policy of Washington would cork him in still tighter, for officialdom had small faith in the little navy and concluded that it was safer to keep sea captains at home toasting their toes at the hearthside than daring the venom of England's thousand veteran ships.

But Hull knew that Napoleon was holding the attention of most of that thousand and that Lord Nelson would never find it important enough to turn his back on the little Frenchman to bring his *Victory* to America. Moreover, Hull felt confident of a victory all his own if he got a chance to fight and he was certain that a triumph over a British warship would

win Washington's confidence in the young but growing navy.

Out therefore upon the high seas sailed the grand Boston frigate, glorying in her powers. Isaac Hull was hunting for his friend, Dicky Dacres.

Now the jovial Dacres, a few days before, unknown to Hull had sent this cocky message to Commodore Rodgers in New York:

"Captain Dacres, Commander of His Britannic Majesty's frigate *Guerriere* of 44 guns, presents his compliments to Commodore Rodgers of the frigate *President* and will be very happy to meet him or any other American frigate of equal force to the *President* off Sandy Hook, for the purpose of having *a few minutes'* tête-à-tête."

"And so," commented an Annapolis historian years afterward, "when the *Constitution*—a sister ship of the *President*—came along, Captain Dacres got exactly what he had asked for, *but not exactly what he expected.*"

For it was this historic encounter that set stay-at-home patriots singing (modestly) in the war ragtime of a century ago:

"It oft times has been told
That British seamen bold
Could flog the tars of France
So neat and handy, oh!

"But they never met their match
Till the Yankees they did catch.
Oh, the Yankee boy for fighting
Is a dandy, oh!"

At five o'clock one hot August afternoon, Dacres and Hull at last confronted one another. Coming down upon each other, both ships were astir making ready for battle. The roll of drums sent barefoot gunners running in order to their posts, and on Hull's ship you may be sure no powder or priming was missing! Well-disciplined, his quick crew took their places, sail-trimmers ready to keep the ship shifting about to give and dodge broadsides. Snipers and grenadiers swung aloft, and aloft too went midshipmen who made ready to cut loose and clear torn sails and broken topmasts that might crash down before enemy fire.

"As the roll of the drums died away," relates Willis J. Abbot, a vivid narrator, "the shrill voices of the boyish midshipmen arose, calling off the quarter-bills, and answered by the gruff responses of men at their posts. Every man from cook to captain knew his place and hurried to it. The surgeon with his assistants descended to the cockpit. The carpenter and his mates made ready their felt-covered plugs for stopping holes made by the

enemy's shot. The topmen clambered to their posts in the rigging led by the midshipmen who were to command them, the line of powder-passers was formed and the powder monkeys gave up sky-larking and began to look sober at the thought of business on hand."

The *Guerriere* opened fire, but the *Constitution,* at Hull's command, held her fire, waiting to close in. The two ships kept moving slowly round about one another like growling dogs threatening to clinch. Still the *Guerriere* thundered at the American, but the *Constitution's* sides seemed forever impervious to cannon balls. She was not damaged, but her gunners were on edge with impatience. "Now shall I give it to them?" asked Lieutenant Morris, the quick Charles Morris of *Intrepid* fame. "Not yet," the cool-headed Hull restrained him.

Still the *Guerriere's* guns smoked.

"Now!" urged Morris.

"Wait," said Hull, but tenseness was telling on him and he spoke less coolly. But now the *Guerriere* had come "within half a pistol shot," and, wild with excitement, Hull yelled, "Now pour it into her, boys! Pour it into her!" And he cheered his gunners on with such vigor that his tight breeches split from waist to ankle!

A Paramount Picture. *"Old Ironsides"*

AND AFTER THE VICTORY—THE GRIM TOLL OF BATTLE.

All the more violent from restraint, the gunners let drive a broadside of double-shotted cannon which at such close quarters well-nigh blasted the unfortunate *Guerriere* from the water.

On board the *Guerriere,* Dacres had a captured American, Captain Orne, besides several American tars whom he had impressed. The good-hearted Dacres, a thorough sportsman and finest type of English gentleman, sent these Americans below saying, "You may retire to the cockpit where you need not take part in fighting against your own countrymen nor watch the struggle."

These men, below the water line, heard the crash and pound of battle above their heads not knowing which way the fight was turning.

Captain Orne afterwards said that from below he "heard a tremendous explosion from the opposing frigate. The effect of her shot made the *Guerriere* tremble as though in the clutch of an earthquake. Immediately after this, I heard a tremendous shock on deck, and was told that the mizzenmast was shot away. A few minutes later the cockpit was filled with wounded men."

As the mizzenmast crashed like a forest tree falling before a tempest, the topmen in her rig-

ging were hurled out into the ocean, and the deck below gave way, the rigging tangled beyond all hope of handling her.

"Hurrah!" yelled Lieutenant Morris, wildly, "we have made a brig of her!"

"Fire on the top again and make a sloop of her," shouted Hull, and down thundered the tremendous mainmast. The *Guerriere,* helpless and unable to maneuver, drifted and fouled her bowsprit in the *Constitution's* mizzen rigging.

The instantaneous Morris leaped to lash and board her, but the two ships were wallowing too frantically in the heavy sea for this to succeed, and though neither crew could board, the floundering *Guerriere* was flung against the *Constitution* until there was almost hand-to-hand fighting from deck to deck. Then suddenly the terror-stricken cry, most horrible of all at sea, rang out: *"FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!"*

The British guns, exploding at such close quarters, had set the *Constitution's* cabin in flames. Immediate dousing with water buckets quelled this horror and with a lurch of the sea the grappling ships were hurled apart. Only the trembling hulk of the shattered *Guerriere* was left rolling in the trough of the waves, but defiantly upon the splintered stump of her

lost mizzenmast the Union Jack kept flying gamely.

"Have you struck your flag?" hailed Hull.

Droll to the last, Dacres answered, "Well, I don't know! Our mainmast is gone, our mizzenmast is gone, and I think, on the whole, yes, you may say we have!"

Upon the surrender Captain Orne came up on deck and later told of the shocking sights before him:

"Many of the men were employed in throwing the dead overboard. The decks were covered with blood and had the appearance of a slaughter house. The gun-tackles were not made fast and several of the guns got loose and were surging from one side to the other with the roll of the ship. Some of the petty officers and seamen got liquor and were intoxicated and what with the groans of the wounded and the noise and confusion of the enraged survivors the whole scene was a perfect hell."

It was of this horror that the cheap patriotism of the day—with little realization of the blood and life the victory cost,—boasted:

"Isaac did so maul and rake her
That the decks of Captain Dacre
Were in such a woful pickle
As if Death with scythe and sickle

With his sling or with his shaft
Had cut his harvest fore and aft.
Thus in thirty minutes ended
Mischiefs that could not be mended.
Masts and yards and ship descended
All to Davy Jones's locker.
Such a ship in such a pucker!"

Captain Dick Dacres advanced to the *Constitution's* deck to surrender, and as his crew was being taken safely from the sinking *Guerriere,* Lieutenant Morris, himself wounded, asked, "Would you like a surgeon, Captain Dacres, to care for your wounded?"

"Haven't you wounded men enough of your own to keep your surgeons busy?" asked Dick.

"No, sir, we only have seven hurt and they have all been taken care of."

Uninjured herself, and with few of her crew wounded, the *Constitution's* very first encounter was marked by her characteristic good fortune.

Lieutenant Morris then asked, "Is there anything on your ship that you would like to save, Captain, before she goes down?"

"Yes," said Dick. "My mother's Bible. I have kept it in my cabin for years." And Lieutenant Morris himself went to save it.

Dacres walked on toward Hull and, drawing

his sword in surrender, offered its hilt to his friendly enemy, but Hull refused it.

"Dick, you're hurt!" he cried in sharp remorse.

"I won't take your sword, but give me your hand, old man; and, by the way, you might let me have *that hat!*"

CHAPTER XXIX

A BLOODY CHRISTMAS

Though Dacres lost, his home newspapers loyally buoyed up his country's morale by making light of it.

The *Constitution*, said they, was "only a bunch of pine boards and a bit of striped bunting." What was the sinking of one frigate to Britain's great navy? The loss was slight.

Indeed, in comparison with the French situation, the whole American affair was slight. It was, after all, no war of invasion like Bonaparte's. In fighting him, England was battling for her national life or death, while the United States was merely retaliating against injustice.

So the war went on,—unnecessarily as it seems in the cooler distant judgment of a day when every schoolboy knows the word "arbitration." Too often we find ourselves to-day as bewildered as Old Kaspar in the famous English lines:

> "But what they killed each other for
> I could not well make out.
> But everybody said," quoth he,
> "That 'twas a famous victory."

At any rate, many brave lives were sacrificed on both sides, and no doubt to heroes now in the Elysian Fields it matters not so much to any of them why they died as with what spirit they faced death.

The officers and crew of His Britannic Majesty's ship, *Macedonian,* Captain Carden, faced it without flinching, fighting gamely to the end.

One of Captain Carden's powder boys,—(the little chap, Sam Leech, who had fought Reuben's favorite Jack at Stephen's wedding banquet for disputing England's powers), wrote home of the horrors endured on the *Macedonian,* saying:

"Though my account may be painful, yet, as it will reveal the horrors of war and show at what a fearful price victory is won or lost, I will tell what things met my eyes during the progress of a dreadful fight."

Painful his narrative was, but what patriots of any country can endure others may well read and ponder, hoping for the day "when war shall be no more." This particular patriot was only a tousled-headed, freckled-faced boy who could brave death but dreaded to wash behind his ears! He was one of those boys, several to each gun, who acted as runners between the cannon and the powder magazine during battle.

Powder passers handed out to them, through a protecting screen, the woolen bags of gunpowder that acted as cannon cartridges. Each boy seized one and, stuffing it under his coat to ward off sparks, had the hazardous task of running under enemy fire hugging six pounds of deadly explosive. Handing the cartridge to his gunner, the boy then raced back for another and another until he dropped, or the day was won or lost.

Sam was soon to run his young legs off in the last fight the *Macedonian* ever made for Old England.

She was cruising off the West Indies searching for the U.S.S. *Essex,* Captain Porter, in the contradictory summertime of West Indian December. But it was not Porter whom she met.

It was Sunday and Christmas Day. Sam Leech wrote home about it in the stiff style and wording taught the boys by the ship's schoolmaster.

"After breakfast," he wrote, "it was common on Sunday to muster the entire crew on the spar deck dressed as the fancy of the captain might dictate—sometimes in blue jackets and white trousers or blue jackets and blue trousers; at other times in blue jackets, scarlet vests and blue or white trousers; with our

bright anchor buttons glancing in the sun and our black glossy hats ornamented with black ribbons and the name of our ship painted on them. After muster we frequently had church service read by the captain; the rest of the day was devoted to idleness. But we were destined to spend the rest of this Sabbath in a very different manner. We had scarcely finished breakfast before the man at the masthead shouted, 'Sail, ho! A large frigate bearing down upon us!'

"A whisper ran along the crew that the stranger ship was a Yankee. The thought was confirmed by the command: 'All hands clear the ship for action, ahoy!' The drum and fife beat to quarters, bulkheads were knocked away, the guns were released from their confinement, the whole dread paraphernalia of battle was produced, and after the lapse of a few minutes of hurry and confusion, every man and boy was at his post ready to do his best service for his country, except the band, who, claiming exemption from the affray, safely stowed themselves away in the cable tier.

"We had only one sick man on the list; and he at the cry of battle hurried from his cot, feeble as he was, to take his post of danger, only to have his head carried away by a cannon ball

later in the battle. A few of the junior midshipmen were stationed below on the berth deck with orders given in our hearing to shoot any man who attempted to move from his post.

"As the approaching ship showed American colors, all doubt of her character was at an end. 'We must fight her,' was the conviction in every breast. Every possible arrangement that could insure success was made. The guns were shotted, the matches lighted, for although our guns are all furnished with first-class locks they are also furnished with matches attached by lanyards in case the lock should miss fire. A lieutenant then passed through the ship directing the marines and boarders—who were furnished with heavy caps, pikes, cutlasses and pistols—how to proceed if it should be necessary to board the enemy. He was followed by the captain who exhorted the men to fidelity and courage, urging upon their consideration the well-known motto of the brave Nelson:

"'*England expects every man to do his duty.*'

"In addition to all these preparations on deck some men were stationed in the tops with small arms whose duty it was to attend to trimming the sails and to use their muskets provided we came to close action. There were others,

below, called sail-trimmers, to assist in working the ship should it be necessary to shift her position during the battle.

"By and by I heard the shots strike the sides of our ship. The whole scene grew indescribably confused and horrible. It was like some awfully tremendous thunderstorm whose deafening roar is attended by incessant streaks of lightning, carrying death in every flash, and strewing the ground with the victims of its wrath, only in our case the scene was rendered more horrible by the torrents of blood which dyed our decks.

"The cries of the wounded now rang through all parts of the ship. These men were carried to the cockpit as fast as they fell, while those more fortunate men who were killed outright were immediately thrown overboard. As I was stationed but a short distance from the main hatchway I could catch a glimpse of all who were carried below. A glance was all I could indulge in, for the boys belonging to the guns next to mine were wounded in the early part of the action, and I had to spring with all my might to keep three or four guns supplied with cartridges. I saw two of these lads fall nearly together. One of them was struck in the leg by a large shot; he had to suffer amputation

above the wound. The other had a grape or cannister sent through his ankle. A stout Yorkshireman lifted him on his arms and hurried him to the cockpit. He had his foot cut off and was thus made lame for life. Two of the boys stationed on the quarterdeck were killed. They were both Portuguese.

"A man who saw one killed afterwards told me that his powder bag caught fire and burnt the flesh off his face. In this pitiable situation the agonized boy lifted up both hands as if imploring relief when a passing shot cut him instantly in two."

On went the frightful battle, with what poor Carden supposed was the *Essex,* and, knowing that the *Essex* carried but few long guns, he blundered in his tactics on approaching her and exposed himself clumsily to fatal broadsides, so that by the time his ship came alongside the Yankee, the *Macedonian* was already wrecked. Her masts, blown off, crushed the decks on falling and let her roll until the very muzzles of her guns dipped under water as she lurched and reeled. By this time the *Macedonian's* deck was a slaughter house smeared with blood, brains, and dismembered parts of dead bodies. Mangled and dying sailors were mercifully thrown overboard to end their

misery in a cold sea-water death. The fury of the Yankee cannon dashed groups of men to death past recognition all at one shot. The schoolmaster who taught the boys and midshipmen sprawled dead upon the deck having valiantly worked his unpracticed hands ramming cannon until the butchery of a large explosion carried men and flying kindlings down before it, beheading in its course a miserable goat, kept by the officers for milk, that had been running, bleating wildly, to and fro amid the carnage. And this blood-spattered Sunday, ironically, was the day of "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men!"

Suddenly a howling cheer arose. The Yankee was withdrawing! With desperate hands the remaining gunners swabbed out hot cannon, rammed in new charges and fired with a gleam of hope for life. But now back swung the Yankee, cleverly dodging astern. She had only repaired her own hardly damaged rigging and returned to finish the Britisher.

Now when the *Macedonian* had first approached the American ship a little Yankee ship's boy on the United States frigate had watched her with such anxiety on his face that older sailor boys had tormented him with laughter for being afraid.

"I'm not afraid," the boy insisted, "but I have got to speak to the captain before we fight."

As he was so persistent an indulgent quartermaster finally took him to the American captain who said:

"Well, Johnny, what's the trouble?"

The youngster saluted and said:

"I'm only ten years old, under age for the regular crew, but just the same can't you put my name on the roll right away?"

"What for?"

"So I can draw my share of prize money when we capture that British warship there."

"And what makes you think we'll capture her?" asked the amused captain.

"Oh, we are bound to, sir!" the child answered with such proud confidence that the captain in amusement had Johnny Creamer's name added to the crew roster.

The American ship was now actually carrying out the cabin boy's prophecy.

In forlorn hope the English officers debated their next course. Obviously they were at their foe's mercy, but Lieutenant Hope, proudly defiant, urged that the *Macedonian* be sunk rather than surrender. Other officers, less passionate, overruled him, and the British colors were re-

luctantly hauled down. As they came to the deck, Lieutenant Hope looked tearfully away, but the powder monkey, Sammy Leech, declared, "It was a pleasing sight, for I had seen fighting enough for one Sabbath and, indeed, more than I wished to see again on a week day!"

As the British flag was struck the American captain asked little Johnny Creamer, "Well, since your prophecy has come true, what are you going to do with all that prize money? You may get as much as two hundred dollars!" and he wondered what extravagance the boy would indulge in.

"I'll use it to go to school for a while," answered the boy seriously, "and I'll study hard and come back to the navy and try to be as good an officer as you, sir." And he spoke with such honest purpose that the captain afterwards wrote home to his wife, "I purpose adopting this youngster to fill in some part the place of our poor little baby who died. Captain Porter has adopted a similar youngster called David Farragut, from whom he derives no end of satisfaction. I am anxious to bring my Johnny home to you."

So the *Macedonian's* capture resulted in something more than the fortunes of war. But

even with his colors down, Captain Carden did not know to whom he was surrendering.

He was taken to the Yankee captain's cabin where he offered his sword and heard these words in a familiar voice:

"Sir, I will not take the sword of so brave an enemy, but I will gladly take your hand!"

Looking up, Carden recognized Decatur. The ship he stood upon was not Porter's *Essex,* but the *United States,* which Stephen and Susan had watched building in Philadelphia fourteen long years before.

In finishing his letter to her, Stephen omitted such details as poor Sam Leech rehearsed. Unutterably depressed by the sadness of victory he wrote in all generosity: "The debate between Carden and myself on the relative merits of 18 and 24-pound cannon balls has been settled in favor of our 24-pounders, but satisfaction is destroyed in seeing the mortification of poor Carden, who deserved success as much as did we who had the good fortune to obtain it."

CHAPTER XXX

"OLD IRONSIDES"

On Holy Innocents' Day,—three days after Decatur's bloody Christmas, war stained red the decks of the *United States'* sister ship, the sturdy *Constitution.*

It happened in this way:

After winning fame upon the lucky frigate, Hull,—with his characteristic generosity,—voluntarily resigned from the *Constitution* to give some other officer a like opportunity of winning distinction with this, the finest ship in the navy.

After his success, Captain Hull might have kept this frigate himself as long as he liked. He was now acknowledged to be by far the most cleverly skillful captain in the service, combining to a great degree the requirements that Peppery Preble demanded of his officers: "Bravery and brains, sir!"

But Hull's thoughtfulness had now conceived a new plan for the star frigate. It was his idea that if "Bad Luck" Bainbridge took the *Constitution,* which, in sailors' superstition, led a

charmed life, his luck might change. Bainbridge was accordingly appointed to her.

Now when the crew learned that they had lost their beloved Hull and had been put under a captain whose ill-fortune was notorious and proverbial, those whose enlistment terms were up left as rats leave a sinking ship. The rest were surly, rebellious, and even mutinous. Poor Bainbridge was faced by unconcealed defiance when he reached the open sea and had to resort to harsh methods to secure any sort of order. Sailors were stripped, strung up and given the prescribed twelve lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails before a sort of surly discipline was won. Making the best of a bad business, thereafter, they went about their work mumbling their uneasy wonder as to whether Bainbridge's streak of luck or the ship's would overrule the other. They soon had a chance to test it.

The *Constitution* sailed from Boston to Brazil to join the *Essex,* with which Porter was out to chop up British shipping and fisheries in those waters. With the *Constitution* went the sloop of war *Hornet* under Captain Lawrence, who had not yet been assigned to the consistently unlucky *Chesapeake* of "Don't Give Up the Ship" fame.

On Christmas day, while Decatur was encountering Captain Carden, the *Hornet* cornered a British sloop, *Bonne Citoyenne,* with half a million pounds sterling on board in the harbor of San Salvatore. Captain Lawrence sent in his challenge to her to come out upon the sea and fight, and as it was a matter of honor to engage only ships of equal size, he added Bainbridge's promise of "hands off." To prove as good as his word, Bainbridge promptly sailed away and later met an antagonist of his own.

When his crew beheld a royal frigate bearing down upon them they groaned in fear that one of Bainbridge's usual disasters was about to overtake them.

The approaching man-of-war proved to be the British *Java.*

"Another captured Frenchman, like the *Guerriere,* built for speed," said Bainbridge critically, his spyglass to his eye.

"The French ships have better lines," remarked his lieutenant, also watching.

"Far better. They are more flexibly maneuvered than the ponderous Britishers too, as you'll soon see."

"Yes," agreed the officer, "the French build good ships but fight them poorly. Well, it is

hard for any sailors to withstand John Bull's fighting tars!"

"The British don't need fleet ships," Bainbridge grimly commented. "For their bulldog policy of close-in and fight all they want is something solid enough to stand the shock and pound of combat at close quarters. We must wing this sea hawk before she can sink her talons in us."

"She may wing us first, she's getting ready," the other answered, watching through his telescope.

"No, she won't," contradicted Bainbridge with confidence. "Commodore Broke on the *Shannon* is the only Britisher I know of who drills in long range gun practice. The rest of them think it a ridiculous waste of time and gunpowder. 'Get so close,' Lord Nelson tells them, 'that you *can't* miss!' Our gunners will pick her to pieces before we close in."

Now the *Java* had her thirty guns ready, but the *Constitution,* as the *Java's* Captain Lambert very well knew, though rated as a 44 actually carried 52 cannon. Nevertheless, with true British audacity he did not hesitate one moment to tackle a ship of greater size. He came daringly down upon the *Constitution* and briskly opened fire.

So now there was a rush of preparation aboard the attacked Yankee frigate.

The drums beat "To quarters!" and gunners stripped to the waist ready for the brutal heat and gruelling labor of the firing deck. Emergency tubs of water were set out by powder magazine and between cannon. Sand was scattered and scuffled grittily underfoot to keep the barefooted sailors from slipping on wet blood. Hot vinegar was made ready to wash away fresh blood's smell and stain from decks already painted a gory red to hide the grewsome spillage. Battle lanterns were lit, nettings triced up taut along the bulwarks to repel boarders, and the order shouted to gunners, "Cast loose and provide!"

At this command the *Constitution's* tompioned guns were unplugged, waterproofing taken from the vent holes, powder monkeys sent scampering and all was in dreadful readiness for bloodshed and death.

Trained against the *Java* were the *Constitution's* fifty-two English-made guns, marked with the royal initials G.R.—George Rex—prepared to blast their former countrymen.

On came the *Java,* a quick and slender Frenchman, but her guns had not been exer-

cised at all by her British crew except by desultory blank cartridge tests.

Now when Josiah Humphreys,—the frigate Stradivarius,—built the *Constitution*—"*that bunch of pine boards under a striped bit of bunting,*"—he had combined French speed lines with British strength. Besides this, American gun crews were all persistently drilled to a fine point of accuracy. The *Constitution,* therefore, was both a rugged ship and a swift one, and her crew had deadly aim. The gallant British Captain Lambert of the *Java* now attempted to escape her deadshot fire, lay his lighter vessel alongside, board and fight it out man to man. But the *Constitution,* maneuvering for favorable position, cast her head first this way, then that, sidestepping the *Java's* rash broadsides. Though the valiant English ship was less heavily armed, the *Constitution* never met a foe more bravely nor more skillfully handled.

The smoke of battle was now hanging so thick between the vessels that only the red flashes of resounding battle cut it, and through it only the shrill trill of bo's'ns' whistles indicated the quick orders that swung the sparring vessels to and fro. Through the acrid sulphurous rolls of smoke, uprising through

riddled sails, came the thunderous collapse of enemy masts that cracked the shell of the *Java's* decks, crushing men below and, like a giant sling, flinging the dim figures of the topmen far out upon the waves to drown unnoticed. Steady and upright stood the *Constitution's* staunch masts and never a crack gave way in her firm decks!

Through the dread twilight of gun smoke broke forth lurid flames as the *Java's* topsails, catching fire, came tumbling to the water, till the crippled ship reeled beneath the fiery and top-heavy wreckage. And still the great guns withdrew, reloaded, pushed out again through grimy ports and belched destruction.

A sudden yelling from the *Constitution's* helm greeted an enemy blast that shattered the wheel and men standing by. With helm gone, the *Constitution* fell off by the head, spilled the wind from her sails and let them flop helplessly. Another shot now dashed great splinters through the faces of officers near Bainbridge, and a cry of "The Captain's wounded!" rang out as a copper bolt was driven clean through his thigh. At the same moment the British captain, Lambert, fell to the *Java's* deck, mortally wounded. His Lieutenant Chads "carried on" valiantly.

Bleeding and torn though he was, Bainbridge kept on fighting desperately for a change of luck. Though his wheel was in kindlings, with quick ingenuity he ordered tackles rigged to the rudder post on the deck below, and detailed men to haul upon it to steer. These men were down out of sight and out of shouting distance from the quarterdeck, so Bainbridge cried, "String a line of midshipmen from here down to the rudder to pass orders along!" and his command "Hard-a-larboard!" was soon rattled from mouth to mouth, "Hard-a-larboard! Hard-a-larboard!" until it reached the sailors straining at the improvised tiller ropes below. The great ship responded to their pull as if eager herself to be directed to the fray! She had a captain that day who rivaled Hull's own ingenuity.

In all the *Constitution's* gallant cruising from cold Yankee waters to warm Barbary waves, through West Indies, down to Brazil and North again, this encounter was the most terrific of her career and the one in which she won her famous nickname.

It soon became clear to the crew that their ship's luck was holding against the captain's. Though ball and cannister dashed against her

wooden sides, "oak, red cedar and hard pine," centuries in growing, toughened and seasoned in Virginia forest and salt water, shed shot harmlessly. Like that sacred bird, the phenix, rising unsinged from flames of funeral pyres, so, miraculous before her sailors' eyes, the *Constitution* refused to scorch or crumble before the foe's onslaught.

"She's made of iron!" yelled one topman, amazed, and the cry was taken up.

"Hurrah for *Old Ironsides!*" and "Old Ironsides" she remains to this day.

Now through the screams of dying men and groan of falling timbers came the enemy's bugle call for boarding. Outcaptained in maneuvers, the English sailors sought to play their ace and wield pike and sword in the blade-to-throat combat that made British sailors the terror of the seas. Down upon them rained grenades and musketry from the *Constitution's* marines aloft while her cannonades mercilessly mowed down each rising line of boarders.

Gone were the *Java's* masts, in a jumble of burning cordage and canvas, her riddled hull silent and shapeless. But nailed doggedly to a splintered stump England's brave colors still fluttered vain defiance. There was nothing left

for the *Java's* lieutenant to do but tear off the valiant Union Jack and confess himself vanquished.

The score stood for the *Java*—48 killed, 105 wounded, and the ship lost. For the *Constitution*—12 killed, 20 wounded, and the ship (once her wheel was restored) well able to sail away triumphantly,—truly an ironsides!

The *Java's* wheel replaced the *Constitution's* own shattered one, and remained there for the rest of *Old Ironsides'* days. Years afterward a British officer being shown over the ship, paused at this helm and said: "This is undoubtedly the finest frigate I ever stopped aboard, but as I suppose I am expected to offer criticism, let me say that it is surprising, considering the splendid workmanship upon the rest of the ship, that she has such a crude, clumsy and ugly wheel."

"That wheel," explained an American officer, "was taken from your own *Java* after ours was shot away and we like to keep it as a souvenir."

The Britisher, with an appreciative laugh, said no more. This wheel then, had to be adjusted before the *Constitution* could sail away from the *Java's* wreck.

Now came the question of what to do with the

captives. Too crippled and too far from land to make port, the *Java* was ordered blown up and sunk. But first came the duty of removing all her men safely.

This was no easy task. Gunfire had demolished all but two small boats in which to transfer five hundred Englishmen to the *Constitution's* deck. Hour after hour for three days these two small boats plied back and forth until every man was taken from the wreck. Among the wounded who were lashed in hammocks and hoisted to the *Constitution's* deck was the *Java's* dying captain. When he was settled and cared for, Bainbridge, also badly wounded, ordered himself carried on a litter to the captain's bedside where he congratulated his foe upon his bravery, assuring him earnestly of hope of recovery, and restored to him his sword and personal belongings rescued from the *Java.*

So impressed by this kindness and courtesy in a conqueror was the British General Hyslop, who was on board the *Java* with a detachment of marines, that he later wrote Bainbridge his appreciation and sent him a handsome gold-mounted sword!

Old Ironsides had dominated Bainbridge's bad luck!

CHAPTER XXXI

ANOTHER SCHOOLBOY TRIUMPHS

And now came *Old Ironsides'* last encounter. Of it Decatur wrote Susan:

"You will be glad to hear that our good but unfortunate friend Bainbridge has had his own and his country's faith restored in him for this first victory of his career,—thanks to Hull's generosity and the *Constitution's* lucky star. Fate seems to have made amends to him by granting him success with our greatest frigate in her fiercest battle when she took her richest prize.

"Bill Bainbridge is no less generous than Hull, and he too has voluntarily resigned to offer the honor of *Old Ironsides'* captaincy to another of our old clique of Preble's 'schoolboys.'

"Charlie Stewart (whom you cannot fail to remember as best man at our wedding) has succeeded him, and under Charlie the *Constitution* has had her last battle, they say (the Navy Department has retired her, alas!),

though by no means her last cruise, let us hope.

"It is a queer coincidence that gave our frigate for her last battle-captain tough old Charlie, who, you know, is himself called among us 'Old Ironsides'—so many fiery encounters he has survived miraculously unharmed.

"Your favorite frigate has given Hull fame for his ingenious and skillful seamanship. Bainbridge she awarded with the war's richest captured prize in her title battle, the heaviest fight she engaged in. And last, both of the two *Old Ironsides* went forth together to outdo her other records in agility and in numbers of victories won and prizes taken.

"Stewart succeeded. On two separate occasions he outdid her other captains by capturing two ships at once! Stewart's opportunity with her came last of all, but he made up for lost time.

"His first move, as you may have heard, was to capture the British war schooner *Picton* off the coast of Surinam, taking along with him as well, the letter-of-marque (privateer) which was with it. The two *Old Ironsides* were swelling off with them when the tables were turned and they had to fly for their lives before the pursuit of a British frigate, *La Pique* (another captured Frenchman), which darted out from

Porto Rico and chased the *Constitution* home. However, after her famous escape from Broke's squadron, all other pursuits must seem mere play to her, so away she went under full sail and a sight she is then, with towering columns of tier upon tier of straining canvas. She escaped easily from the British under cover of night. All went well then until Cape Ann was reached when down upon her bore two heavy enemy frigates, the *Junon* and *La Nymphe*—more French captives pressed into British service. These swift vessels ran our ship into Marblehead harbor and then dared to threaten her even under cover of a hastily gathered land force along the shore. Under fire here from militia, infantry and artillery, whose bite proved worse than their bark, the British men-of-war withdrew, and Charlie, after a close call, slipped out again and gained Salem safely.

"Our aggressive Stewart, not content to prowl along his own coast, but evidently holding the belief that a sharp offensive is the best defense, carried warfare so far into foreign waters out of reach of news that he kept on fighting for some time after the war was over.

"Charlie was off Lisbon when he sighted sail of the last two ships the *Constitution* did battle with.

"Now perhaps you understand—and perhaps you do not—that in this game of naval warfare the trick is to bring your broadside across the bow or stern of your enemy where they have but few guns and the whole length of their deck lies before the mercy of your entire broadside battery. This is called *raking* her. If you are lucky enough to cross her bow, you may, by directing full fire upon the bowsprit (to which most of the masts' supports are straining), cut loose her stays and bring all her masts toppling down. Though these stays are all double, so that in case one gives way its preventer-stay remains, our marksmen are skillful in demolishing the rigging at long range. Thus we have succeeded in mortally crippling British ships before ever they got close enough to practice their chief art of boarding.

"To work out on paper, with arrow showing the direction of the wind, the maneuvers of your favorite frigate in her battles would prove as fascinating as chess were I but there to explain the fine points of the game to you. No fear, I shall not weary you with technicalities, but the *Constitution* is as dear to your heart as to mine (did you not christen her?) and I cannot refrain from reporting her fortunes to you.

"Imagine, then (for Charlie's final battle),

three toy boats in your rainbarrel with the wind fanned upon them from the northeast. Arrange upon your miniature sea in the moonlight, the two little British ships—a tiny frigate, *Cyane,* and a toy sloop, *Levant,* side by side (the *Cyane* a little ahead) coming north while your little *Ironsides,* between them, comes south.

"Now have your *Cyane* and *Constitution* pass and exchange broadsides. As the *Cyane* slips by, bring up the *Levant* for another broadside, while her partner attempts to cross the lone *Ironsides'* stern and rake her decks fore and aft. Now you must be quick. Make Charlie give the *Levant* his broadside and then under cover of his own smoke whirl around and dash another broadside into the *Cyane* threatening her stern.

"It is impossible to carry out these rainbarrel tactics for you on paper without recourse to nautical terms confusing to you, but some day I will manipulate the little boats for you until your eyes shine.

"For the present, suffice it to say that Charlie did the unbelievable. He kept running and backing from one ship to another, not only keeping *Old Ironsides* from being raked, but by keeping the enemy ships apart he *fought and*

A Paramount Picture. *"Old Ironsides."*

"OLD IRONSIDES" RAKES THE DECK OF THE PIRATE CRAFT

captured each separately! And when, at the end the *Cyane* tried to run away he cut her off and took them both to port. Though chased across the Atlantic, he reached Porto Rico safely, and there first heard that peace had been declared.

"None of us has handled a frigate any better. So now Charlie, like Hull, Bainbridge and '*yr. obt. servt.*' has his congressional medal and gold hilted sword!

"So there is the last fight of our *Constitution* in the last engagement of the war. The Navy Department now retires her *before her work is done.* For after all her keel was laid to quash Barbary pirates. This she has not done. This war with England has but delayed her task.

"I am sure that I cannot see why we should be willing to go on paying tribute to Algiers when we thought we had finished the matter with Tripoli!

"While we were busy fighting the British, the Algerians seized our merchantman, the *Edwin,* and proceeded, as of old, to sell the crew into slavery. Tobias Lear's treaty was but a waste of time, for both Tripoli and Tunis have proved treacherous. So that's to be done all over again and if he knew it, old Preble would surely roll over in his grave.

"The *Constitution* in the meantime has given her best to another cause, and now when another call comes to fight the Barbary pirates she cannot answer it. I wonder who will be sent to finish *Old Ironsides'* task?"

PART VI

HER TASK DONE

The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.
—Oliver Wendell Holmes.

CHAPTER XXXII

DECATUR FINISHES "OLD IRONSIDES'" TASK

STEPHEN DECATUR himself (a commodore now) was appointed—appropriately—to finish her task.

Though he sailed back again to the Mediterranean on another vessel the spirit of *Old Ironsides* went with him.

Like another, later, American who said, and carried out his word, that "if he ever got a chance to hit slavery he would hit it hard!" Decatur was now on his way to fulfill his own oath to hit piracy and its slavery and he was going to hit it hard!

His squadron sailed in May, 1815, and under his command was our old friend the captured *Macedonian* and a new *Guerriere.* There went also *Constellation,* the *Constitution's* twin and one of those three sisters built originally for the very task at which she now alone represented the war-worn *United States* and *Old Ironsides.*

The *Argus, Nautilus* and *Vixen* of former Mediterranean days had fallen into British

hands and their places were taken by the defiant little brigs *Firefly, Spark* and *Flambeau,* and schooners of significant names, *Torch* and *Spitfire,* besides two other stranger sloops, *Epervier* and *Ontario.* Decatur's own flagship, another stranger to us, was the *Commodore Lewis.*

With Decatur went Bainbridge, a commodore himself now, bringing back his own squadron to avenge those days behind Barbary prison bars. To him, who had suffered most, was granted the honor of flying his pennant on the flagship *Independence* of seventy-four guns,—the first line-of-battleship over which the American flag ever floated!

Was his luck, won on *Old Ironsides,* to hold good now upon the mighty *Independence?*

Down dropped Decatur upon piratical waters, and an Algerian ace fell by happy chance at once into his hands.

Scarcely through Gibraltar, the *Lewis* sighted an Algerian sail and with a decisive promptness that brooked no temporizing, Decatur flew at her and opened fire with such swift severity that the pirate's masts gave way. On came the avenging American frigate commanded by no "schoolboy" this time, but by a master seaman seasoned with years of victori

ous naval fighting. Decatur "mauled and raked her" with such violent celerity that in no time the Algerian's colors tumbled to the deck. Not trusting to honor—a thing these pirates did not know, Decatur told off a crew to hold and sail this prize.

A richer prize it was than he had guessed. For this, the largest ship in the whole Algerian navy,—he had silenced all her forty-four guns, —turned out to be the admiral's own flagship— and the admiral lay dead upon the deck! Some Barbary sailors he sent off in a boat with the order, "Go tell your Bey his admiral and his flagships are ours, and that I am coming to bring him to terms."

Lining up his own squadron with his quarry, in the harbor of Algiers, Decatur at last landed to do the thing that he had itched to do years and years before. He was now grimly bound to dictate to the barbarian monarch terms of his own and to force the royal pirate by a whiff of gunpowder under his nostrils to do as he commanded,—or die.

Commodore Decatur with his officers and sailors entered the harbor in a boat that had one pair of its oars pulled by the brawny and faithful Reuben James and another by his shadow, the young Jack Tar.

Out into the harbor stretched the great stone breakwater, sheltering the inner anchorage from the violence of the waves. Violence, indeed, that gnawed continually upon it, demolishing bit by bit parts continually built up and rebuilt. Upon this mole now swarmed hundreds of Christian slaves—captives from ships—the *Edwin's* possibly among them, Stephen feared.

As the small boat from the American warship slid along by the breakwater with flash and dip of oars, the slaves upon the masonry gazed at it curiously, afraid to hope that it might mean liberty!

The hiss and crack of long bull whips recalled idlers to their tasks. Strung up upon a gallows on the pier above the heads of toiling slaves swung the body of one who had tried to escape—and failed. His grisly remains, lashed in sailcloth to keep off ravenous seabirds and to preserve it as long as possible, hung by the neck, a grewsome example of the fate awaiting slaves who tried escape or mutiny.

All the work of the mole's tremendous masonry was done by sheer strength of slaves' straining backs and arms. At what cost of human flesh, blood and sinews these mighty

rocks were raised! Even as Stephen looked, a block of Barbary granite, weighing tons, was hoisted into place by the frantic haul and push of a hundred straining hands.

It slipped, and sliding back crushed one white man beneath its weight.

A snap of whip urged other hands on to roll the block away, another snap reproved one compassionate enough to kneel in pity. The body was thrown overboard to sharks. The work went on.

Stephen set foot in Algiers more fiercely determined than ever in his life to end this barbaric horror now and forever.

Through the narrow uphill streets the Americans now stalked, Reuben's gift-sword rattling at Stephen's belt. On toward the Bey's palace they strode.

The dirty lanes so differed from fair Norfolk and old Philadelphia that Stephen felt himself transported in a dream into the Arabian Nights. Sinbad and Aladdin he met at every turn. Surely even the genii must be somewhere near in hiding!

There was the glare of whitewash, the smells of street dust, wharf water, pitch, musk and tobacco. Along the ways lined by open stalls, sly merchants squatted by their wares, bicker-

ing with distrustful customers while bales of drugs, raw hides and piles of melons, lemons, olives, dates, spilled out upon the sidewalks tempting buyers,—wares doubtless reaped from cargo-bearing vessels.

There was the lisp of slippered shuffling feet along the alleys, the smell and shambling gait of camels, trot of goats and sheep driven in flocks along the streets. Foreign sailors, native robbers, Jews in the unchanged costumes of old Bible times all surged to and fro through the streets of this city that fattened on ill-gotten gains and stolen human beings.

Up to the Bey's palace at last came avenging fate in the form of Commodore Stephen Decatur, U.S.N.

Entry was obsequiously made before his imperious advance. Ushered by salaaming slaves, the officers of the United States Navy, with clanking swords and conspicuous pistols, strode without reverence sternly into the great Bey's presence.

Yusef sat upon his throne.

Above the royal rascal hung a scarlet canopy, jewel encrusted, "of such antique form as may have sheltered the Queen of Sheba."

He sat, eyeing the Americans with majestic unconcern, his gemmed fingers toying with the

famous gold and jeweled peacock fan with which it was his royal peevish custom to smite European consuls who had not groveled sufficiently in homage. With it he had once struck an American consul soundly across the mouth. The cruel Yusef's eyes were now shrewd slits as, handsome and scornful, he regarded his visitors with insolent indifference.

Near him, seated lower than the great raised throne, his grand vizier sat and studied the faces before him. He was an old man with white and shaggy eyebrows, and from under these frosty brows his black keen eyes took tally of every man before him. He wore the white Moslem veil and Arab burnous, like other Mohammedans gathered near in council. And now the expected genii actually materialized before Decatur's gaze, for standing tall and silent as a bodyguard rose the enormous figures of eight Afric giants. So still they stood that they might have been carved columns, and so black were they that those columns might have been of ebony—polished, for their naked flesh gleamed with oil that made their black skins glimmer over the cords and knots of ox-like sinews. Naked they were save for a length of scarlet cloth wound around and twisted in at

the waist, hanging but halfway down their powerful thighs. Large gold hoop ear-rings dangled against their cheeks, and broad bands of gold bound their arms and legs, ankles and wrists, while the curve and wicked glitter of scimitars made these eight Ethiopians a formidable sight. Reuben regarded them with wonder, a wholesome respect and a good grip upon his cutlass.

"Great Yusef," said Decatur, speaking through a frightened interpreter who diplomatically garnished the plain-spoken Commodore's flat harsh words (for Yusef either could not or would not use the English tongue), "these are my terms, and this time an American is dictating to you and you are not dictating to us. Hear me, then, once and for all. Release at once all Americans in slavery, and know this: The United States will no longer pay your blood money. At last the day has come when we can say to you, '*The United States has millions for defense but not one cent for tribute.*' Instead you will hand over to us ten thousand dollars in gold at once, in payment for your theft of our ship, *Edwin.* And you will write your recommendations to your fellow corsairs in Tunis and in Tripoli to do likewise. You will decide this here and im-

mediately or I shall go out there upon your harbor and sink every Algerian ship on it and every one of yours that enters, and I will demolish your warships and send their captains on to join their dead admiral. I am making no treaty with you. I am commanding you to do my will. Let me know your answer now."

As these straightforward words, tempered and softened though they were in the mouth of the subservient interpreter, reached the ears of the royal robber, his half-shut eyes opened in hate, the fingers tapping with the fan opened and closed convulsively.

At his movement, Reuben's hand caressed his blade hilt and as Jack said afterwards:

"If his High and Mightiness had smacked the Commodore with that there giddy fan, Reuben would have had his royal head clipped loose from his necklace and a-rolling down the throne steps like a ball before the fan fell. What was them big niggers to Reuben? He proved once before a scimitar couldn't scratch his hard old sconce!"

But Yusef scorned the effort of any gesture with his fan at all. His lips moved and the Grand Vizier spoke aloud for him after some muttered protest.

"Leave the palace and be thankful that you

leave it alive. Yusef makes no agreements. He is his own law."

When this message was conveyed to Decatur, he made no answer, and without a bend of his stiff Yankee neck, he and his men resolutely left the throne room. Fury brought the dark blood to the king corsair's face. But now there was a cry of alarm from a younger Moslem humbly stationed furthest from the throne and near a window. He pointed and the older men, bending forward to look now, warned the Bey that one of his cruisers was coming toward the harbor and might fall unwittingly into the midst of the bothersome Yankee squadron.

An angry sweep of Yusef's imperial hand silenced them as he growled, "Old women! Would you bend knee to every blustering foreigner? And is the red beard of Barbarossa to give way to the chattering double chins of timid hags among the invincible corsairs?"

There was a mumbling into silence when a breathless messenger burst in.

"Great Bey, live forever!" he panted, dutifully making a ceremonial and back-breaking salute.

"Know ye that him you send away is none other than the terrible Decatur?"

There was a stir now among the throne room council!

"Decatur! He that eats and fattens upon gunfire, slyer than a serpent, bolder than a desert lion, more deadly than an asp! Surely this man will do the things he says! He speaks no idle words!"

So spoke the veteran grand vizier in earnest advice.

"Fetch the foreigner back," commanded Yusef, still with a show of contemptuous indifference, though he added to the vizier, "Count what gold he desires from the stronghold coffers."

For the first time in all his vile career, this kingly reprobate had come to terms he dared not violate.

Content so far, Decatur triumphantly sailed on to Tunis, and with the outrage upon the indomitable Eaton vengefully in mind Decatur laid down the law to the Bey of Tunis, freeing all American captives and squeezing from him promptly forty-six thousand dollars—the estimated value of maritime damage done since Eaton's day.

Then came a final twist of the screw upon the old Bashaw of Tripoli. Decatur entered that grimly familiar harbor with what turmoil of

emotion! There lay the rocky Eastern Passage of *Intrepid* daring. There as of old the rocks and reefs and scene of the *Philadelphia's* destruction. There upon the hill gleamed white stones over the Christian graves of Dick Somers and his men. There frowned still the castle and Bainbridge's dungeon.

Where, by the way, was Bainbridge all this time?

Decatur alone enjoyed the delight of just retribution in the novelty of taking $25,000 tribute from the blackmailing old Bashaw.

The Bashaw, a patriarch grown wickeder with age, ordered this money paid, for there was nothing else that he could do, but his evil eyes glowed like live coals, his words were like cold poison. Decatur could not restrain a boyish laugh at the old villain's discomfiture. After all these years it was more than satisfying now to turn the tables severely on the vicious rascal.

Though Decatur had sadly felt no satisfaction in victory over the gallant Captain Carden, his satisfaction over the Bashaw amounted to nothing short of jubilance and glee! If only Bainbridge were on hand to share in this triumph so rightfully due him of all men!

One more thing remained to be done in

Tripoli. "Free me my countrymen!" Decatur demanded and when he was escorted to the yard where Christian slaves were rounded up and the Americans released, his eye fell upon two foreigners, tall slim young boys, light-haired, blue-eyed, of Viking build. "Who are these?" Stephen asked, loth to free his men before these captive youngsters' wistful eyes. "Danes," said the guard. "I'll take them too," announced Decatur, high-handed now.

He ordered these boys, tearful at the unexpected blessedness of freedom, to be properly clothed and comfortably fed, but at their attempts to thank him Stephen said, "Sending you home, my boys, only pays a small part of the gratitude we owe a Danish consul who rendered us friendly and invaluable service here a good many years ago."

So, with captives freed, damage paid and tribute ended, Decatur at last finished *Old Ironsides'* task. The sway of the Barbary pirates was over forever.

But where was Bainbridge?

He had been delayed by storms at sea and with all his old bad luck arrived on the scene after everything had been finished by Decatur.

His lucky star was waning, but it had not yet wholly set.

CHAPTER XXXIII

COMMODORE BARRON PAYS A GRUDGE

DECATUR'S own task, too, was nearly done. Done were his days at sea, and for this Susan was truly thankful! At last, at last, it seemed to her that they would have a cozy normal home life together, and no longer would she spend tortured days of war alone on land longing for navy news and dreading what word it might bring.

Decatur was one of the navy commissioners now,—they were to live in Washington—and the capital had grown up and changed so during war time that now there was no complaint to be made about the forest all about the White House with wood, wood everywhere and not a stick to burn! The question now was where to find the wood!

Buildings had gone up and in spite of enemy fires in Capitol and White House, Washington was not so badly injured that it could not present the aspect of a flourishing and important city—no mud roads now or swamps—

and Susan found gay society life here diverting for she was now as popular as ever.

The Decaturs took a house in Georgetown—their first home together. "I feel so bride and groomy," Susan said. The house was the Kalorama mansion in the fashionable part of old historic Georgetown which, retaining its name taken from King George the Second—(not George the Father of his country!)—rather looked down upon that upstart Washington, D. C. Indeed when Washington suggested tactfully that Georgetown change its Tory name to West Washington, it replied haughtily that as Georgetown antedated the new city it would be more seemly to refer to Washington as East Georgetown! To its exclusive and delightful society Georgetown welcomed the hero and his popular wife.

Little Johnny Creamer, who was to have brightened their home as their own son, had met a strange fate for a sailor boy. While pleasure boating in the Mediterranean after Decatur's triumph in Tripoli, he had fallen overboard and been drowned. His loss alone saddened the new prospect of the Decatur's home life. But other clouds were gathering to darken Susan's happiness.

An agitation had been made to reinstate the

censured and forgotten Barron to good naval standing. It was even suggested that he be made Navy Commissioner also. And this Decatur forcefully opposed. Stephen did not believe Barron fitted for the office. "The man is incompetent," he still declared. In his honest heart there was left no shadow of personal animosity—only a sincere desire for his country's best service. He balked Barron's return.

For this Barron was bitter. Correspondence flew back and forth sharply between Commodore Barron and Commodore Decatur. Decatur did not mince his words. Barron choked upon them. The result was inevitable in the code of honor of the day. Barron challenged Decatur to settle matters at pistols' point upon the field of honor. The famous dueling ground at Bladensburg, Maryland, just outside Washington, was chosen for the meeting place to settle the dispute.

Susan was in a panic—not that she could believe that Stephen, who had weathered so much warfare, might fall now after national strife was done, but her heart tightened in dread and premonition. Besides, she did not trust Barron.

Stephen pooh-poohed it all. Barron was taking the only course left open to him in the

public gaze—they did not want to kill each other, it was a gesture only. Barron was merely centering his vindictiveness at the whole bad situation upon Decatur and once this was over, there would be an end to all the fuss. "I certainly shan't kill him," Decatur assured her lightly.

"But if he kills you?" asked Susan, breaking down. "I could lose you bravely for your country, but I would have no spirit to bear a senseless, needless sacrifice!"

Now Bainbridge happened to be in Washington.

On the day of Barron's challenge and his own acceptance, Decatur met his old friend of Tripolitan fortunes at the navy yard. Bainbridge had just planted a willow slip that he had brought from Napoleon's St. Helena. He was full of reminiscences, and the two walked off together. Decatur told him of the challenge. Bainbridge offered to be his second.

"Done!" agreed Decatur gladly. "Now take this message to him for me. Tell him of course I have to shoot him, but I will only shoot him through the hip."

"What folly is that, Steve?" Bainbridge disapproved. "Either a real duel or none at all," said he.

"All duels in my mind are folly," said Decatur. "But Barron will understand. Do you recall my duel with Reuben?" he asked, smiling.

"I am not likely to forget it," said Bainbridge. "You know Dicky Dacres made Hull second you instead of me, because he said my luck would surely down you! If you feel that way now, do not hesitate to say so. I am afraid of my unlucky streak myself."

Decatur only laughed. "Say no more about it. Go and give Barron my message."

Barron received this message as an insult.

"Tell him this is no child's play!" he retorted hotly.

The day of the duel arrived. It was a raw blustering March morning, as if the March wind which had first blown Barron and Decatur together were taking special spite in doing so again.

Beneath the oak trees on the dueling ground were gathered many navy men, to whom word of this had slipped out. Friends, messmates, fellow commissioners, army and navy officers of all ranks formed in silent rival groups apart.

The surgeons made ready. The seconds were busy with arrangements. Reuben held Decatur's coat and hat. Bainbridge and his

opposite measured off fifteen paces, and marked the distance. Barron and Decatur took their places, pistol hands upraised, Barron's face dark with passion, Decatur coolly smiling. The referee gave the signal. Two shots rang out as one and both men fell. With one glance at his beloved master, Reuben sprang madly toward Barron with a barbarous yell and would have dispatched him savagely with his dirk had not a half dozen officers sprung forward and disarmed him. The surgeons bent to work. The stretcher-bearers came forward and both duellists were taken back to Washington. Susan, waiting fearfully in Georgetown, was notified and her worst fears confirmed.

Stephen had kept his word and given Barron only a superficial wound in his hip. Barron's bullet was less accurate. Of the encounter, General Solomon Van Rensaellaer, an army man who had witnessed it, wrote home of it thus to his wife:

"I have only time after writing to several to say that an affair of honor took place this morning between Commodores Decatur and Barron, in which both fell at first fire. The ball entered Decatur's body two inches above the hip and lodged in the opposite side.

"I just came from his house. He still lives,

but will not see another sun. Barron's wound is severe, but not dangerous. The ball struck the upper part of his hip and turned to the rear. He is ruined in public estimation. The excitement is very great."

Bainbridge's unfailing black fortune had returned with a vengeance. "Before another sun," Stephen died with his hand in Susan's, "a needless, senseless sacrifice."

Her grief was doubled by his way of going—harder to bear than if in warfare for his country—and hard at best when life together in their own home had only just begun. But a worthy mate for a valiant officer and hero, Susan kept her grief to herself. It was a sad homegoing to the Kalorama house which she had settled with such happiness and hope.

Decatur's body was borne slowly along the way from Washington to Kalorama with his fellow officers as grief-stricken pallbearers.

Bainbridge was one, and his companion in prison, Porter; the devout McDonough was another bearer, fortified in this sorrow by his shining faith; and though there were other pallbearers, these, Commodore Rodgers among them, were the only members of the "schoolboys" in Washington at this time.

On through the thronged streets out of Wash-

ington the sad procession moved, past myriad flags at half mast.

Through silent, sorrowing crowds, the steady dreadful shuffle shuffle of marching feet without a band made the scene deeply depressing as the coffin, wrapped in the Stars and Stripes, moved onward to the melancholy tolling, tolling, of the city's minute bells.

The nation was mourning Commodore Decatur, the hero of Tripoli. But to Susan, Stephen had only left her for a while, to join his brother Jamie, Dick Somers, and his beloved Peppery Preble.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE EAGLE OF THE SEA FURLS HER WINGS

With the passing of Decatur and her other "schoolboy" captains, *Old Ironsides'* fighting days were over.

Thereafter as a schoolship she was sailed on many a peaceful cruise by young officers-in-training, before Annapolis was ever thought of and even afterwards she faithfully continued in her country's service teaching seamanship as the Mother of Midshipmen.

Hers was the first keel laid in a navy that won in time commendation for her country from a reluctant Englishman,—Charles Dickens himself, who, in all British fairness, declared: "The United States is honorably remarkable for protecting its subjects wherever they may travel, with dignity and determination."

Rugged Charles Stewart, himself also called "Old Ironsides,"—who had first fired Decatur to service in assuring "protection to Americans wherever they may travel,"—outlived all the *Constitution's* schoolboy captains, outlasted his nation's Civil War, and lived to see

the *Constitution* retired at last at an honorable old age. He, of all her captains, alone lived to see her lying at dock still and senile, and could tell a new and forgetful set of schoolboys of her prowess in the grand and vanished days of her prime. "She was a lucky ship," he always ended, wagging his head and tugging his beard in proud reminiscence of his own glorious youth and hers.

And indeed she had always been marked by good fortune.

About her ever hovered that curious quality which made her known to every superstitious sailor (and every sailor *is* superstitious!) as a Lucky Ship, for—

She never lost a captain by death,
She rarely lost a sailor in her battles,
She never lost a mast, and
She was never badly injured in a fight.

She led a charmed life and always brought her men and her own sound self safely out of the hottest warfare unscathed. No enemy warship had ever blown holes in her wooden hull,—she was, in short, *Old Ironsides!*

New ships of actual iron, new ships and faster, no longer dependent on grace of sails and whim of weather, have supplanted her, but let her record be noted: in cruising back and

forth to Europe, the Mediterranean, West Indies and New England coast, the old *Constitution* accomplished nearly the work of a modern steamship! She has seen the clipper ships give way to steamers, she has lived to see the ocean crossed by airships, and if her luck continues she may live on to see greater conquest of air and wave.

Her luck still continues, for though The Last of The Frigates had gone back to end her days where she began them—in Boston Harbor—and while she lay rotting at her wharf neglected and forgotten, the school children of her country came to her rescue. Schoolboys—and girls, in seaport cities and inland towns alike, rose in honor of her fame and service, to save the grand old ship. Their penny contributions have come tumbling in to salvage her from ruin, and to restore and preserve her permanently,—a relic of past patriotic glories, rescued from decay. Her future is now assured like that of Lord Nelson's famous flagship *Victory*, which still lives, honorably pensioned.

Once before this *Old Ironsides'* traditional luck saved her from destruction. Deemed unseaworthy after all her years of brilliant service, the thrifty Navy Department had ruthlessly condemned her to be scrapped and

sold as junk. Then, too, public opinion saved her.

Reading the navy's notice in the *Boston Advertiser,* an indignant young law student, hot with honest sentiment, roused public feeling against this thoughtless sentence by passionately scratching off and mailing to the newspaper a poem which will outlast the *Constitution's* timbers and keep her soul alive. For ships are not inanimate and the spirit of *Old Ironsides* is immortal!

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky.
Beneath it rang the battle-shout,
And burst the cannon's roar;
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

. . . . .

Her deck once red with heroes' blood
Where knelt the vanquished foe
While winds were hissing o'er the flood
And waves were white below;
No more shall feel the victor's tread
Or know the conquered knee:
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The Eagle of the Sea!

Oh! Better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep
And there should be her grave.
Nail to her mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the God of Storms,
The lightning and the gale!

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

THE END

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